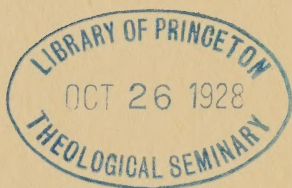

**THE ESSENTIALS
OF THE
CHRISTIAN FAITH**

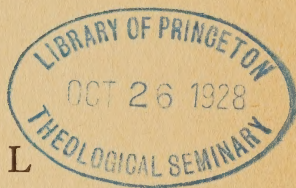
HUGH R. MAGILL



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The essentials of the
Christian faith

THE ESSENTIALS *of the* CHRISTIAN FAITH

By
HUGH R. MAGILL



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Preface

THE earnest and intelligent enquirer after the vital and necessary elements of the Christian faith is amazed at the number and variety of trifles, or comparative trifles, which the various religious organizations and groups have declared to be essentials. Little wonder then that an entirely false conception has arisen in the minds of men as to the meaning and purpose of Christ's redemptive mission, and that many of the finest minds and noblest spirits of this age have turned away from this misrepresentation of the Christian faith with contempt.

If the reading of this little book shall help in leading to a new and unbiased appraisal of the gospel of the Son of God, and a due appreciation of its liberating life-giving power, it shall have served its purpose.

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CHAPTER I.

Realities

IT is strange how slowly men are learning the practicality of the principles of life and conduct enunciated by the Lord Jesus. All civilized men are familiar with them, can repeat them, are willing to praise them, and yet refuse to practise them. It is no libel on Christendom to say that while in all its divisions it has formally and officially accepted the teachings of the Lord Jesus as the rule of conduct for believers, there has never been a living faith in their soundness as applied to the whole life of the individual by more than a minority, and often a small minority, during the nineteen centuries that have passed since the "Man of Galilee" proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom of God. Stranger still is this fact, that many who loudly proclaim that they believe every word of the Bible from cover to cover and are continually sounding the alarm against what they call attempts to weaken its authority, are in practise little better than avowed infidels: for while they say, "Lord, Lord," with rapturous unction, they refuse to obey his plainest

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commands. Thus we have the amazing spectacle of a Lord adored, but not obeyed; a Master whose example is praised, but not followed; a Teacher whose words are treasured as the expression of the noblest thoughts known to men, and treated as if their application to life would bring ruin to mankind.

This is not said in unkindness, nor in the spirit of fault-finding, but to emphasize one of the principal causes why the Church, which is the Body and the Bride of Christ, has not attained the prestige, power, authority, and glory, which are rightfully hers. How many professing Christians are disappointed because they have failed to experience the fulness of the joy of life, forgetting that they have not obeyed the Lord of life! How many are heard bewailing the unhappiness, discord, and misery that exist, and mumbling piously of a mysterious Providence, which for some inscrutable reason plagues the hapless children of men; and never for a moment imagining that man's sorrows are the fruit of his selfishness, or, if the shorter word is preferred, his sins. Men are unwilling to permit Christ to guide their lives, because however vehement their protestations of loyalty, they do not quite trust Him to look out for their interests; and they have more confidence in the wisdom of their own judgment than in His. How glibly they speak of accepting and fol-

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lowing Christ; as if it meant no more than the repetition of a phrase; failing to perceive that to accept Christ means also to have Christ's mind, and to be filled with Christ's Spirit. (Rom. 8:9) To follow Christ means to follow His example, to feel, act, and think as He did. "He went about doing good." Let no one attempt to evade the issue by attempting to draw a distinction between being good and doing good. What Jesus said remains true, "By their fruits ye shall know them. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." (Matt. 7:16, 18) Conduct is the index to character. What you do tells what you are. "My little children, let no man lead you astray: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous: he that doeth sin is of the devil." (I. John 3:7)

How pitiful and pertinent the old question, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" If only there were some way of burning deeply these words of the Master, and the truth they emphasize, into the consciousness of every one who wishes to be thought a follower of the Lord Jesus they would effect a tremendous reformation. Is it not for this, or something like this, that the children of men are expectantly waiting? In all religious circles high and low, broad and narrow, is there any-

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thing more needed at this present time than that men should sit at the feet of the Christ, and receive His message in His own words from his own lips, and be endued with His mind and Spirit? It is being said, and with a great deal of force, that Christianity lacks vitality, and the power to govern the lives of men; that it is pre-occupied with subjects only distantly related to man's welfare, and that the passion for justice, righteousness, and love, which characterized the Lord Jesus has given place to a warfare of words. It is only too evident that acceptance of certain theories of the church, or the sacraments, or of certain doctrinal formulas and shibboleths has been made the criterion of the genuineness of one's discipleship, in place of the one simple test the Lord Jesus Himself gave, and the only one He ever gave, the test of the indwelling Spirit whose manifestation is love. Before He went out to the agony in the garden He said to his disciples, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

The late Senator Ingalls of Kansas, while at the height of his brief career, aroused considerable indignation by saying, "The sermon on the mount is

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an iridescent dream, beautiful as the wings of a butterfly, but impossible of application to the business of life." There was a time when Wu Ting-Fang, one-time ambassador of China to the United States, received a great deal of publicity, and his remarks on many subjects were widely published. On one occasion he was quoted as saying that the teachings of Jesus, while very beautiful, were entirely unsuited to the business of life, and in this respect inferior to the maxims of Confucius. The reaction to this slur on the unique position of authority occupied by the Lord Jesus was prompt and decided.

A few months after the close of the World War a minister was urging the cultivation of a kindlier, more forgiving, spirit, and in doing so quoted, "Love your enemies, and do them good, and lend, despairing of no man; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be sons of the Most High: for He is kind toward the unthankful and evil. Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful." (Luke 6:35-36) The quotation so annoyed the teacher of a Bible class that he said, "Dr. M——, you can never get men to accept that; it is contrary to human nature." In this he expressed the common feeling of a great many men and women who pride themselves on their loyalty to the authority of the Scriptures. Had anyone questioned the supreme

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authority of the Lord Jesus, or the authenticity of the words quoted, resentment would have been sharply expressed; but where is the difference between the "heathen" Wu Ting-Fang, or the "ultra-modernist" Senator Ingalls, and the Bible teacher mentioned? Jesus said to his detractors, "Why do ye make void the word of God with your traditions?" Why do Christians of today make void the plainest teachings of the Lord Jesus by saying, "Impossible to make these teachings the rule of conduct and the guide of life"? Is the heretic who flatly challenges the accuracy or the authority of this and that portion of Scripture as dangerous a heretic as the man who says, "I believe it every word," and proceeds to act as if it were a farrago of nonsense? Incidents could be multiplied which bear out the charge that the purpose and goal of God's redemptive love have too often been hidden by the earth-born clouds of pride, prejudice, and ambition; and this not alone by one of the churches or sects, but by them all.

Who that has studied these things can doubt that there is crying need of a change, not of forms and formulas so much as of hearts, minds, and souls! We need a reformation that shall lead men out of and away from the entanglements and obscurities of warring systems, and the jungle of theology, into the

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very presence of the Christ of God. A reformation which shall not be at all concerned about the opinions and pronouncements of Dr. Augustine, Dr. Luther, Dr. Calvin, Dr. Liguori, or the many doctors of today, but which shall be intensely concerned to know and do the will of Jesus Christ. When it comes it will lead men to place the spiritual emphasis where Christ placed it, not upon one set of duties or relationships, but upon them all. "Then shall the bells of the horses, and the pots in the kitchen be Holiness unto Jehovah." The unfriendly differences so often deplored are only symptomatic of the needs referred to, and they will all dissolve into nothingness when Christians are willing to trust Christ enough to obey Him.

"Follow the Christ, the King,
Live pure, speak true, right wrong, follow the King—
Else, wherefore born?"

THINK!

There is true wisdom in the statement, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so he is:" for what a man thinks in his heart colors all his life, and determines his feelings, words, and actions. This, however, is not true of the fugitive thoughts which go scurrying through the mind and vanish, nor the thoughts aroused by necessary contacts with other minds, as

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in reading the literature of the day, or hearing public addresses, or engaging in private conversation. These exercise a comparatively slight influence upon the individual: for unless they are congruous with what one thinketh in his heart they are speedily rejected and forgotten. It is the settled convictions, the permanent modes of thought, in which one's whole nature acquiesces that the ancient sage had in mind; in other words, the faith which has become an integral part of one's entity, the beliefs which govern the heart and guide the will.

To say "as a man thinketh in his heart" colors all in his life is not enough. The complexion is important, it either adds to or takes from the attractiveness of one's person; but, after all, it is mighty thin, and easily affected, and in a little while its bloom and glow fade away. What a man thinketh in his heart becomes his life, his very self. The beliefs one holds are, therefore, of the utmost importance to him, whatever they may mean to others. The conceptions he has formed of God and the universe; what he thinks in his heart of Jesus Christ and His place in the regard of men; what he believes concerning his own destiny and the destiny of his fellow-men; these motivate action, and determine life. To say that the life is everything and belief of little consequence indicates a singular ignorance of an elementary

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truth: for what one thinketh in his heart (believes) determines his life. All a man does, all he becomes, is the necessary consequence of what he truly believes. "Keep thy heart with all diligence: for out of it proceed the issues of life." That is not all, since the thought life determines life's activities, and since every action produces a corresponding reaction, every act of every man influences some one or more of his fellow-beings. An unworthy action has an unworthy influence, and continues operating until checked by a counter-influence. Guard and guide your thoughts by the aid of divine wisdom: for your thoughts make you. Above all other thoughts, give heed to this, what does the Gospel mean to you? What do you think in your heart of Jesus Christ? Do you see in Him the very image of the Divine Substance, and the effulgence of the Father's glory? Do you believe that in knowing Him you come to know God? Do you also see in Him the perfect man, the goal toward which God would have us strive?

CHAPTER II.

Many Conflicting Opinions

THE subject before us deals with the essentials of the Christian faith. It is not, therefore, a discussion of religious faith in general as manifested in the devotees of the great ethnic religions, nor of the faith demanded by anyone of the numerous groups into which Christendom is at present divided. It is strictly confined to that particular form of religious faith which is based upon the authenticated teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. There will be no attempt to deal with the subtleties which hold spellbound the superficial. Let those who have not yet grappled with the realities of life, and those who have not yet learned life's meaning, nor the purpose of the Gospel, attempt to reveal the meaning of the numbers in the book of Daniel, or the cryptic utterances of the Apocalypse of John; it will be sufficient for our present purpose if we shall be enabled to lay aside our prejudices and preconceptions so that we shall be able to differentiate more clearly between the things which at their best are merely ornamental and at their worst monstrous,

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and the things which are vital and indispensable to our Christian faith. Please remember, our object is not to study the essentials of the faith demanded by any of the denominational or theological groups, however ancient and venerable, or modern and jazzy, but the essentials of the faith which is based solely upon the universally accepted teachings of Jesus Christ and his apostles.

To a visitor from another planet, or to one entirely ignorant of the Christian faith, there would be something hopelessly inexplicable in the spectacle presented by men and women, apparently of average intelligence and possessing some degree of education, organized into sharply divided, and at times unfriendly, organizations, each of whom at the same time professed that the compelling motive in his or her religious activities was love for the one Lord Jesus Christ. To one not entirely lacking in acumen it would seem that if the professions of the people known as Christians meant anything, if they possessed the slightest fraction of the love and loyalty to their Lord and Master which they proclaim, the centripetal force of their common love to Christ, and their common devotion to His one great cause, would in less time than it takes to tell this have obliterated all distinctions, and broken down all divisions, thus gathering into one the scattered children

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of God. To an intelligent heathen our practises must give the lie to our professions. The harmony of the Gospel of the grace of God is broken, so far as its effect upon unbelievers is concerned, by the discords of those who insist that their religious frills and follies are the fundamentals of the Christian faith. Is this not because we have been following our great doctors of divinity rather than the divine Christ?

The march of events teaches the necessity of men of like mind and spirit and purpose keeping rank, if they are ever to accomplish their object. This is often illustrated in the field of politics. One reason why little cliques or blocs can seize and hold power, as in the Russia of today, is that their opponents do not keep rank. Once the Arabs were united by a great passion; they believed themselves called of God to propagate the faith of Islam, and with the power of their united strength they became the conquerors of their age. City after city and nation after nation fell before them. They held large territories in Europe; for more than 800 years they ruled in Spain; and their advance into France was checked only after terrible fighting on the part of the Franks under Charles Martel. At that time they were a power to be reckoned with, today their power is negligible. Why? Because instead of being

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united as one man in common devotion to Mohammed and to Mohammed's God, they became hopelessly divided, and wasted their strength warring upon each other.

We speak of the Gospel as the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth. Can we, however, say that its potentialities have been realized? Plain common sense tells us they cannot so long as Christians permit their opinions and prejudices to divide them into hostile camps. If we would think less of what men have said of Christ and more of Christ Himself, less of the philosophy of salvation and more of the glorious fact that Jesus saves men from their sins, and that only in Christ can the fondest dreams and hopes of men be realized; and then forgetting everything else, except that we are Christ's and wholly committed to His service, go forward to win the people of the world into one brotherhood of believers in Him, the power of the Gospel would be a living conquering reality in the everyday life of men.

In considering the essentials of the Christian faith we must exercise the utmost care to distinguish between the essential and the incidental, the inherent and the external, and the permanent and the temporary. For example, man is man irrespective of race, culture, social position, or personal qualities.

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These have their value in adding to a man's power and attractiveness in his relationships with other men, but they can be manifested only through a living man; the man is more than any of them, more than all of them. The statue has the form of a man; it has a regularity of form and features that makes it a thing of beauty, but however beautiful, it is only a simulacrum of cold, dead marble; it is not a man. Forms in religion have their value, which only the unthinking underrate, just as skill in tailoring, and in cooking and serving food, have their value. Some men are gross feeders and the niceties of cooking and serving are lost on them; they enjoy and thrive on what would offend others of a refined nature. Others can enjoy only what is delicately flavored, and when it is served with appropriate dignity. Again in spiritual affairs, as in political and physical, men differ.

There are men of robust nature, able to think clearly, unwilling to submit to exactions which have no sanction other than custom; men of independent mind who refuse to be governed by the dicta of self-constituted authorities. Men of this type have furnished the path-finders for the human race; and to them we are indebted in a large measure for the progress that has been made, and the freedom we enjoy. On the other hand, there are other men who

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cannot act without the guidance of authority outwardly expressed; splendid men able to do useful work so long as they are directed, but helpless drifters when left alone. Such men in politics must have a king or boss, and in religion they must have a superintendent, or bishop, or pope; someone upon whom they can throw the responsibilities they either cannot or will not carry themselves. There are men and women who must be ministered to spiritually by kindergarten methods; and in all probability the majority of the human race at the present day belong to this class, and will continue to belong to it for many generations to come.

With those who must have an elaborate ritual with imposing ceremonies, and the appeal of personified authority, and the solemn pomp of a visible head of the church, I have no quarrel, provided they keep these accommodations to their intellectual and spiritual infirmities in the background. These things are the sensuous elements of a worship which should be purely in spirit and in truth. Nor would I quarrel with those who, having advanced slightly beyond this elemental stage of religious life, insist on holding to dogmas, formulas, and systems, which are memorials to the intellectual and spiritual dawning of an earlier age, provided they likewise keep these symbols of the twilight of faith in the background,

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where they belong. Knowing this, we recognize the futility of insisting upon any particular system of government, or form of worship. It is foolish to expect men and women with an inheritance of dependence upon and slavish devotion to the mummeries of ancient superstitions to appreciate and be satisfied with the simplicity and dignity of that lofty spiritual worship which is unbound by forms, which is free from the sensuousness of temple pageantry,—a worship which owes nothing to human authority, or human intervention,—which is independent of priestly mediation, other than the mediation of the one great High Priest,—and which enables the believer to enter the holiest of all, approaching God with the same loving confidence that the child approaches the father from whom he has experienced nothing except love,—until men shall have learned to distinguish between what is vital and what is merely incidental in the life of faith.

God is very patient, and His children share His nature and characteristics. Doubtless there will come the time when men shall know that God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth, but it cannot be forced by an unwise zeal. Some day the boy will not need to count on his fingers in solving his little problems in arithmetic, meanwhile let him grow. If back of all

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the theological flummery, and the ecclesiastical frills and fads, which at present seem necessary to certain groups of people, the essential elements of the Christian faith are firmly held so that the Spirit of Christ fills them and moves them; if the Spirit which governs is love, the imperfections and crudities of systems and symbols may wisely be overlooked.

“Opinion, let me alone: I am not thine.
Prim Creed, with categoric point, forbear
To feature me my Lord by rule and line.”

CHAPTER III.

Things That Are Not Essential

The seen is the changing, and the unseen is the unchanging. (Socrates)

The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. (St. Paul)

WHAT are the essentials of the Christian faith? The question is not new, it was raised in the Apostolic church, and has been vigorously debated ever since. It was occasioned by a small and relatively unimportant group of men who insisted that certain dogmas, and formulas, and observances, not taught by the Lord Jesus, are essential to the Christian faith. The earliest recorded discussion of this sort occurred in Jerusalem, when Paul and Barnabas appeared before the church to make clear the nature of their work and methods of procedure, in order to secure a stop to the persistent and violent opposition to their work on the part of an extreme Jewish-Christian clique within the church. Like all pioneers of truth they were more concerned with the substance than the form; and in order not to obscure the beauty and simplicity and power of the Gos-

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pel they had been emphasizing the essentials. In their judgment it was enough that the Gentile converts turned from their evil ways to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, and brought forth in their lives works meet for repentance. The Holy Spirit had been manifested in these converts from among the Gentiles; they had brought forth the fruit of the Holy Spirit, who thus sealed the fact of their regeneration. This incensed the Jewish-Christian members of the infant church, and they refused to have fellowship with Gentile Christians, unless they became Jews before they became Christians. They insisted with the vehemence of men in the wrong that Gentile converts must submit to all the requirements of the Mosaic law, and the rabbinic traditions. They ignored the fact so clearly demonstrated by the Lord Jesus, that by far the greater part of these ceremonial observances were not only not authorized by their God-given law, but were also in direct opposition to its spirit and purpose.

In view of a similar activity of the Judaistic elements in the church of this twentieth century it is well to call attention to the unequivocal terms in which Jesus Christ denounced the religious leaders of his day for the heavy ceremonial burdens they had laid upon the people. If this attitude of our Lord, with its corresponding teachings, were more

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firmly held in mind, it would aid greatly in demonstrating the essentially non-Christian nature of much that is being labelled Christian. It shocks us to read the statement of Cyprian of Carthage, "Outside the pale of the Church (Roman Catholic) there can be no salvation," but the spiritual brethren of Cyprian persist as a small remnant, to the great injury of the kingdom of God in our evangelical churches, and they pronounce doom on all who will not accept them as infallible interpreters of the will of God.

NOT A SINGLE RITE ESSENTIAL

It may quicken your minds to a keener study of the question, if first of all some things are pointed out which are in no sense essentials of the Christian faith. Not a single one of the rites observed in the various churches is essential, in the sense that failure to observe them or take part in them precludes the hope of salvation. Take the sacraments for example: The Roman Catholic Church officially teaches that no unbaptized person can enter Heaven, not even a little child. According to the teaching of this church, all unbaptized children go to hell, where they remain in a specially prepared place known as the "*limbus infantum*." In the *limbus infantum* they are beyond the flames which torment adult sinners,

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and there is no positive suffering, but through all eternity they are deprived of the beatific vision of God. The Church of England and her sister Episcopal churches in other countries bar from her communion those who have not paid homage to the episcopate by receiving the rite of confirmation at the hands of a bishop. Those Baptists who still adhere to the distinctive teachings of their sect refuse to admit to their fellowship a believer who has not been baptized by immersion, nor will they grant letters of dismission to any other than a Baptist church.

Now the sacraments are to be fittingly observed, and they have a positive value in symbolizing four of the most precious truths of the Christian faith, but they are not, and can not be essential to salvation, i.e., salvation does not depend on them. There have been and there are large companies of believers noted for their beautiful spiritual life, and truly Christ-like character, who at no time observed the sacraments. Again, it could easily happen, and doubtless such cases have occurred, that a man living in a heathen community through reading of the Scriptures, or in some other way, had arrived at a knowledge of the truth, and turned to God with all his heart, sincerely repenting of his sins, and loyally obedient to Christ, had brought forth in his life the

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fruit of the Holy Spirit. Yet this man by reason of his knowing no Christians is unable to have fellowship with his fellow-believers, and is compelled to live and die unbaptized, never having shared in the Lord's Supper, and never having enjoyed the benefits of public worship. Is such a man doomed to eternal damnation, because his lot was cast where he could not receive the benefits of the sacraments? Could anyone who has been touched by the Spirit of Christ call such a man accursed from God? Surely not.

Here is another man who for entirely different reasons has never been baptized, and never had fellowship with believers in the public worship of God. Due to an accident he is dying; and he turns to God with all his heart, and asks to be baptized into the Christian faith. A bishop of the Roman Catholic Church and a Baptist minister are beside him, and each of them is willing to accede to his earnest request, but they cannot perform the rite because there is no water within miles of them, not even enough to sprinkle him. Although anxious to be baptized he passes into the next world unbaptized. Is he doomed to eternal torment, because there was no water with which or in which to baptize him, Never! It is unthinkable that the Christ who gave pardon and

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assurance of bliss to the dying thief will reject anyone who sincerely turns to him because this or that rite was not observed. Will the compassionate Saviour who took little children in his arms and blessed them, saying, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God," condemn infants and little children to endure an eternity in hell, because someone failed to see that they were baptized, A rite, any rite, is of value only insofar as it leads to a clearer understanding and appreciation of the reality it symbolizes, or as by the stirring of the emotions and the quickening of the imagination and the uplifting of the soul, it helps men to know God better, and thereby to become Godlike.

CHURCH ORGANIZATIONS NON-ESSENTIAL

It is in no wise an essential of the Christian faith that there is or should be one, and only one, outward, visible, ecclesiastical organization, known as a church. There must be unity of faith and spirit: for true believers are one brotherhood in Christ, bound together by their common life in Christ, and their common love for one another; but to compel all men to be gathered into one ecclesiastical fold does not accomplish unity, it secures an apparent uniformity,

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nothing more. Certainly the Lord Jesus gave no directions for the organization of one great church, outside of which no one could be saved. The deference paid to the mother church in Jerusalem was due to the presence in it of the apostles and brethren of our Lord. Their more intimate fellowship with the Master during the days of his flesh, their devotion to Him, their holiness of life, and their surer knowledge of His mission and teachings, commanded the respect of those who were led to Christ through the ministry of the apostles and their followers. Is there, however, any genuine proof that the churches existing toward the end of St. Paul's life were united to one another in any formal official organization? If there is any such proof it is not found in the Scriptures. Nevertheless, they were a unit in love and devotion to Jesus Christ, and a member of anyone of them was welcomed by the officers and members of the other churches as a brother beloved in Christ.

It may or may not be that the interests of the kingdom of God would be greatly forwarded if all the sects could be united in one great church. There is, however, no guarantee in history that such would be the case. There was a long period during which there was only one church organization in the West-

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ern world; and it was a period of spiritual somnolence, gross moral corruption, and intellectual decay. When we charge the Reformation with the divisions which now plague Christendom, let us also make due note of the advances which are directly traceable to it. It crowned manhood with new dignity, dethroned tyrants, liberated and enfranchised serf and peasant, purified society, humanized government, introduced learning, dispelled ignorance, taught men to think with untrammelled minds, and to lift up their souls to God without requiring the meditation of priests. Since accuracy demands charging the Reformation with some mistakes and evils, it also requires an honest appraisal of the value of its fruits, and they can be seen by anyone who has eyes to see.

We should, however, set our hearts on realizing the unity for which our Lord made the five times repeated petition in the great high-priestly prayer; and we shall the sooner achieve it, if we are careful to distinguish between spiritual unity and a mechanical and material uniformity. In this connection it will be the part of wisdom to weigh the teachings of history. Some of the most shameful crimes in the annals of mankind were the result of attempts to obtain uniformity in the outward expressions of

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faith and worship by men who were as lacking in true statesmanship as in a sense of humor, or in the Spirit of Christ. Had they possessed the first two they would have recognized the absurdity of their program, while the third would have saved them from the infamy of the unspeakable cruelties they inflicted upon those who dared to differ from them. They thought to secure uniformity by the thumb-screw and the rack, and to silence the voice of dissent by strangulation or the stake; and they failed. It is not the purpose of the high God, who makes no two leaves on the same tree alike, to compel all men to march to the goose-step of uniformity, or to vegetate within the mouldy ruins of a discredited and outworn ecclesiasticism. The ancient and the more recent persecutors of those whom they regarded as heretics were guilty of serious errors, and one of these was the mistake of confusing unity of formulas and ritual with unity of faith. Forms of worship, and doctrinal formulas, may vary, and yet be the expression of the one faith: for whenever men are in vital union with Jesus Christ, believing in Him as Lord and Saviour, accepting the guidance of His Spirit, doing all things in His name and for His sake, they are in the unity of the faith, whether the outward symbol of that faith be expressed in the

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high-sounding liturgy of Byzantium, or in the simplicity of a Quaker meeting.

SCRIPTURAL INERRANCY NON-ESSENTIAL

Many who have agreed with me up to this point may demur when the assertion is made that belief in the infallibility of the Scriptures is not now, and never was, an essential of the Christian faith. The attempts to destroy men's faith in the trustworthiness of the Scriptures as a revelation from God to men, given with the object of helping men to know God that they may become God-like, and teaching them of their relationship to God, and the duties they owe unto Him, and to their fellow-men, have frightened some timid or rattle-brained Christians into a panic, very much as Uzzah was frightened for the safety of the ark of God, memorial of the Divine presence, when the oxen which drew the ark stumbled. A little more intelligence and a sounder faith would have shown them that truth is divine and indestructible. Whatever is of God shall abide; whatever is not of God shall perish. It is one thing to believe that God has given us in the Holy Scriptures a sufficient and trustworthy guide to salvation; and it is quite another to assert the infallibility and verbal inerrancy of these writings. To say, as is

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often said, "I believe every word of the Bible from cover to cover" is to prove that your reading of it has been either exceedingly meagre or superficial, and that you have missed its message: for the Bible never makes any such claim. On the contrary, in many places it quotes statements in order to show their falsity or wickedness.

In the Book of Job it plainly states that God said to the friends of Job, whose speeches of reproof and admonition are often quoted as divinely inspired and approved, "You have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as hath my servant Job." In the first and second chapters of Job, Satan voices sentiments which I once heard one of the most prominent laymen in America ascribe to the Psalmist, in a public lecture. Said he, "The Psalmist is right, gentlemen, when he says, 'Skin for skin, yea all that a man hath will he give for his life.' " Similar and grosser examples could be given. I remember overhearing a group of elderly, respectable, church members condoning immorality by citing the examples of the patriarchs, and David, and Solomon. A gross perversion of the purpose of Scripture, but quite in harmony with the theory of verbal inerrancy.

Unless you permit prejudice and anger to outrun reason, you will agree that there cannot be an in-

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fallible book, the nature of man precludes the idea. By infallible book is meant one which would infallibly convey certain thoughts, quicken certain emotions, and lead to certain lines of action in its readers, irrespective of natural abilities, intellectual and moral training, hereditary influences, and environment and bias. As a matter of fact, we know that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to frame a law for the common business of every day in such language that men honestly desirous of keeping the law will all be of one mind concerning it. Even learned and wise judges are often honestly puzzled to know how to apply laws definitely framed for particular cases. Is the Bible different from other books in this respect? That is, can there be no doubt of each reader grasping its meaning, and rightfully interpreting its directions? By no means. The guidance of the Holy Spirit is necessary to a proper understanding of the Scriptures. "Spiritual things are spiritually discerned."

The natural man cannot know the mysteries of the spiritual kingdom. The reading of the Bible will not in itself illuminate. To those who seek the Spirit's guidance it is indeed a savor of life unto life, but to those who rely upon the natural mind it is a savor of death unto death. "The letter killeth, the Spirit giveth life." The fact that men have been

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divided in their interpretation of scripture into hostile groups, as in the case of Pharisee and Sadducee among the Jews, and Trinitarian and Unitarian among Christians, teaches man's inability to comprehend the truth of revelation unless he asks for and receives the illumination of the Holy Spirit. You may say the divisions referred to are caused by the children of light in conflict with the children of darkness. Will any Christian dare to express so harsh a judgment? It is never true in human differences that one side is entirely right and the other side entirely wrong; usually one side is more nearly right than the other. There is little doubt our differences would be less marked if we gave the personal element a lesser place, and exalted the divine. Far too often there lurks in the hidden recesses of the will the unrecognized, nevertheless unshakeable, determination to yield neither jot nor tittle of that for which we took up the cudgels of debate. In following some of the conflicts that have been waged in purely scientific matters, one has often been painfully conscious that passion for the truth weighed less with the contestants than the desire to prove their case to the world. When the element of self is injected into any problem, the reactions are altered; and the solution which would otherwise have been clear as day is muddled and obscured.

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In dealing with spiritual as with other problems the intrusion of self, or the influence of self, introduces an unknown quantity, whose value we may conjecture, but can never determine exactly by our most elaborate intellectual processes. Lest there should seem to be in this statement derogation of human intellect, and depreciation of the invaluable aid that culture gives to the Christian life, let me hasten to add that we are in duty bound as Christians to use every honorable means available for the highest development and perfection of both mind and body. God has ordained that in our present condition body, mind, and spirit are a trinity, and whatever affects the one will also affect the others. The body is the servant or instrument of the mind and will; the more perfect the body, the more efficient its service. In like manner our intellectual powers and breadth of culture enlarge the resources of the spirit. While recognizing these truisms we are also familiar with the fact that one may be a giant so far as bodily strength is concerned, and the veriest pygmy intellectually. Nay more, the mind may be unsound, subject to delusions, while the strength and beauty of body may appear altogether admirable.

Such was the case of Louis II., the mad king of Bavaria. It would also be easy to name men of

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recognized intellectual ability along certain lines who were at the same time depraved and vicious. The late Oscar Wilde and the late Stanford White will serve as examples. One's body, therefore, is not a true index to the quality or greatness of one's mind; and one's mental powers cannot be regarded as indicating the qualities of one's soul. Alcibiades, the famous Athenian, possessed every gift of body, mind and personality, but he appears to have been utterly unmoral.

Such being the case, is it not evident that any revelation made to man through men in human language becomes thereby liable to the frailties and limitations of humanity? The treasure is there, undoubtedly; but, as St. Paul makes clear, it is in earthen vessels. There is an infallibility connected with revelation, but it is not in the words of the book; it is in the Spirit who uses it. Since the revelation has been made in terms of human thought and experience there will always remain many points on which there will be an honest difference of opinion by equally devoted followers of the Lord Jesus. A survey of the history of Judaism or of Christianity will make this plain. How many of those who studied the prophecies relating to the Messiah, and who ardently longed for his advent, were enabled by their studies to recognize Him when He came?

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The divisions which have rent the church and nullified her potency for establishing the kingdom of God would have been avoided if men had recognized their personal limitations while honoring their God-given individuality; if instead of quarreling over the words of Scripture they had been living the truth, and proclaiming the principles of Christ's kingdom. How easily we forget, "No man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit." It is not the wording of the Scriptures, nor the dates of their composition, nor the names of their authors, that are of primary importance to us; nor that passages wrenched from their context seem to contradict similarly isolated passages elsewhere, or to prove the most fantastic doctrines: it is the message they bring to us from God. They are a never-failing spring of delight to the thirsty soul; they lighten the darkness of our pilgrimage; they are more precious than hidden treasure: for they reveal God through the knowledge of Jesus Christ. This is why they were given to us, and not to be the subject of interminable discussions as to whether every word is inerrant, and every illustration scientifically accurate.

It will help us to avoid the folly of perverting the Scriptures from their appointed use if we will keep in mind one fact that has often been pointed out, i.e.,

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that the Christian faith was a living force in the world, embodied in a holy band of faithful people, years and years before a single word of the New Testament had been written. If belief in its inerrancy or infallibility were an essential of the Christian faith, it would have been written first, and the Christian faith and life would have followed. We rejoice, however, that the Scriptures as given are a sufficient and trustworthy revelation of God through which by the guidance of the Holy Spirit men come to know Him, whom to know is life eternal.

CHAPTER IV.

The Basis of Belief

IF we follow the recorded teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall recognize that no particular church organization, nor sacramental rites, nor outward conformity to an accepted discipline, nor belief in an infallible and verbally inerrant revelation, is to be held essential to the Christian faith. They may be esteemed as helps, or revered for the sacred memories they enshrine, or for their practical value under certain conditions; but the Christian faith is greater than any one of the churches, greater than all the churches, with their governments, sacraments, confessions, and discipline. Like the reservoirs and pipes in which the drinking water of our cities is stored and conveyed, to ensure a sufficient supply for daily needs at all times, they are the usual channels of the Divine grace; but as it makes little difference how and where the waters are impounded and distributed so long as they are conveyed uncontaminated by filth or disease germs to those who have need of them, so our churches are of value only insofar as they serve as

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the instrumentalities through which the grace of God operates. Nothing can be more evident than that God has never been confined to any one nation, nor any one church organization, nor even to all of them. This would be impossible, since His fulness filleth all things to overflowing.

The first great essential of the Christian faith is stated in the first article of "The Apostles' Creed," "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." The basis for this belief is briefly as follows: the fact that the world is a cosmos, and the cosmos a universe. Moreover, the universe is composed of an unknown number of worlds, each bearing a definite relationship to all the others, influenced by and exerting an influence upon them. It is so vast in extent that the figures employed to denote its distances baffle our comprehension. And yet these unnumbered worlds, so vast in their extent, which compose the universe are more perfectly adjusted to each other and synchronized in their relative movements than the most accurate chronometer man ever made. There is no jarring, nor clashing, nor confusion, but the symmetry and harmony of a perfect unity, manifested in the unending orderly procession of the unnumbered spheres. Only one will is evident, guided by an infinite wisdom and knowledge, and possessing infinite resources of

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power. We know that some person is responsible for the universe; and that the Supreme Person competent to design, create, sustain, and govern the universe is necessarily infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, knowledge, and power: for no lesser person, nor group of lesser persons, could fill the role.

The normal person of average intelligence can no more help believing that one supreme personality created and controls the universe than he can help believing in heat and cold, in light and darkness. He may believe in more than one god, but even then he will believe that one of them is supreme. There may be a difference, and, as a matter of fact, there usually is some difference, in the conceptions men form of God, or in the language which they use to describe Him, but practically all civilized men agree in believing in one God, the Father, the supreme Lord, Maker of heaven and earth.

Thus far normal men of average intelligence are obliged to agree, there is no other course open to them. When we come to the questions, what do we know of God? how has He made Himself known? what is His relationship to men? what was His purpose in creating men? we find the widest and wildest divergence of opinion. One respectable school of thought recognizes the existence of a personal Cre-

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ator, but believes and teaches that, having created the universe with self-governing properties, He abandoned His creation and his creatures to their fate. According to this theory He is no longer in the world, has nothing to do with it, and is wholly indifferent to the welfare and happiness of mankind. There have been a great many modifications of this view since Lord Herbert of Cherbury brought it into prominence in the early years of the Seventeenth Century, but in every case there is a flat denial of the authority of any scripture which claims to be a revelation of God, and of any active interference on the part of God with the affairs of men. Those holding this view are comparatively few in number, and they usually regard all forms of religion with contempt as merely the superstitious survivals of the age of ignorance.

On the other hand, the great ethnic religions possessing the devotion of the great masses of humanity have each their Holy Scriptures, which their adherents believe and accept as God-breathed. The Hebrew prizes the Old Testament as the authentic word of God, and scorns all other revelations. The Moslem accepts the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as a veritable revelation from God, but the acceptance means little, since he insists that in their present form they are corrupted and untrust-

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worthy, having been altered by Jews and Christians in order to destroy the testimony they would otherwise pay to Mohammed as the prophet of God. The 200,000,000 followers of Mohammed accept only the Koran as the authoritative word of God to men. The Avesta, written 2,500 or 2,600 years ago, was revered by the many followers of Zoroaster as a true and complete revelation of God to men, and remains the sacred scriptures of the surviving Parsees. Perhaps the most ancient writings in the world today are the Vedas, which for 3,500 years have helped to mould the religious life of the people of India.

When our missionaries go with the gospel of Jesus Christ to Moslem, Hindu, Buddhist, Confucianist, Shintoist, one of the greatest obstacles they encounter is the faith these people have in their own religious books, and their unwillingness to believe that their sacred writings are either insufficient or untrustworthy. Family and tribal feelings are likewise involved; naturally they prefer to hold fast to the faith of their fathers. Therefore, when the Christian affirms that God spake unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, and in these latter days in His Son Jesus Christ, and that the substance of what God spake through the prophets and through His Son is accurately re-

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corded in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments there are not wanting cavillers who object that since all the great ethnic religions claim to have a divine revelation exclusively true, and holding all others false, it follows that all revelations are equally true or equally false, with the emphasis on the equally false. It is wise to note objections that they may not later cause confusion. To shut one's eyes to important facts favorable or unfavorable is folly. We recognize that approximately two-thirds of the people of the world believe either the Vedas, or the Avesta, or the Koran, or the Ching or Five Classics of Confucius, in preference to our Holy Bible, and yet we declare with all our heart that the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the only satisfactory revelation which God has given to men; through which as through no other writings we come to know God in the beauty of His perfections, and in the wonder of His redeeming love. Why is this? When the sun shines the moon and stars are obscured, their light is lost in the radiance of the king of day. Compared with the divine wisdom and moral sublimity of our Holy Scriptures all other writings are folly, and sink into obscurity.

All religious faith rests upon the conviction that above, beneath, behind, and in all things, visible and invisible, there is one supreme personality who

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created and now controls the universe according to a wise and holy plan. In addition to this, all Christian people believe that this supreme person, whom they call God the Father, is unfolding His purpose as it relates to men, and that He has sufficiently revealed it for our present needs through the prophets and through Jesus Christ His Son.

CHAPTER V.

The Holy Scriptures

God—spake unto the fathers by the prophets, and unto us by his Son. (Hebrews 1:1-2)

AS already stated, some men of undoubted intellectual ability and moral integrity have taken the position that since a divine revelation would necessitate a supernatural communication to men, and since they themselves have had no experience of such a means of communication, and have known no one else who had, and cannot understand by what means it could be effected, they assume that it is impossible and contrary to reason. We need not stop to discuss the term impossible in this connection. Fifty years ago it was enough for someone with a show of learning to say, "Impossible," and unless his opponent could demonstrate the possibility of his proposition the discussion was ended. Today the situation in this respect is entirely changed. So many things that were derided as impossible are accomplished facts, that no man of science would care to endanger his reputation by pronouncing anything impossible. The most he

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would venture to say would be, "I do not see how this can be possible." To the objection that it is contrary to reason let the following question make answer.

Is it not eminently reasonable to believe that an infinitely wise God had a specific purpose in view when He created man? A favorite dictum of the soi-disant scientists of fifty years ago was "There is no caprice with God, therefore no miracles." We agree that there is no caprice with God, and it is just because of this that we are convinced that He had a definite end in view when He created man. The fact of creation implies a necessary relationship between the Creator and His creature; but what that relationship is, and what the purpose of God in man's creation, cannot be discovered unless God is pleased to make it known.

Man has learned and is learning much of value through nature, experience, and reason. Reason tells him with the most absolute positiveness that a universe perfectly harmonized to the minutest detail must have both a creator and a governor. It could not be the result of chance; chance always produces chaos, it can produce nothing else. His personal experiences, the teachings of history, and his observations of nature, all contribute valuable practical information, but the question of all questions re-

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mains unanswered: for neither his reason, nor the accumulated lore of many generations, nor the light of nature, are able to tell him the nature and character of God, or what purpose God had in creating him. Since man is endowed with the power of reason, and the free will to make his own choices and decisions, and since an infinitely wise God must have had a definite purpose in creating him, it follows that the co-operation of man is required in effecting the purpose of God. Doubtless, God could pulverize man's will, and reduce him to a lower status in which he would be only the puppet of fate, an automaton that could not help acting in a given way when a given influence was exercised. Instead of doing this, God has always respected man's individuality—His own creation and appointment—and so far as we can learn he seeks in all things to uplift and ennoble, and to enlarge the powers and dignity of man.

In order to co-operate with God man must know Him, and he must also know what God's purpose is concerning him; and since he cannot know until he is told, a clear and trustworthy revelation is an absolute necessity. This, we believe, He has given in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. To the first essential article of the Christian faith, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of

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heaven and earth," we add a second, God has revealed Himself to men through the prophets, and through Jesus Christ His Son, and the substance of this revelation is contained in our Holy Scriptures.

As has been shown, belief in the infallibility or verbal inerrancy of the Scriptures is not an essential of the Christian faith; and the bitter quarrels which have raged over this question and divided Christians have done grave dis-service to the cause of Christ. If those responsible for these quarrels and their unhappy consequences would only pay a little attention to the plainest teachings of the Word, and allow the Spirit of Christ to guide them, they would soon come to know that it is not by the claims we make for the Scriptures that we honor them, but the obedience we render to their instruction. "Not he that sayeth, Lord, Lord, but he that doeth the will of my Father."

For one to insist that his fellow-Christians must accept the theory of the infallibility and verbal inerrancy of the Scriptures before he will consent to have fellowship with them, and love them as brethren in Christ, is to occupy an untenable position; one open to the sharpest attacks of the enemy, and one

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which the Scriptures do not sanction. What should be held fast and insisted upon is this, that we have a sufficient and trustworthy revelation of God and His purpose concerning us, and our destiny, in the Scriptures. They tell all we need to know by way of revelation in order to our highest development in this present life, and our fullest enjoyment of God in the life of the world to come.

There should be greater emphasis placed upon the import of the message of the Bible. Its purpose is not to supply men with knowledge they can gather themselves by study; its one and only purpose is to supply a knowledge of God, and of man's relationship to God, and of man's destiny, not otherwise obtainable. While not encyclopedic, it is sufficient for its purpose, and dependable; and in reading it we must always remember why it was given. The main points of its teaching may be summarized as follows:

1. God is; and He is the Creator of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.
2. He made man in his own image; it is his declared will and purpose that man shall become God-like.
3. Man, through distrust of God, rejected His guidance, to follow his own desire, and sinned.
4. Sin deranged man's spiritual nature and alienated his affections from God.

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5. Because of God's unchanging nature, His love for man remains constant; and because of His love He is unwilling to leave man in the wretchedness caused by his folly. Therefore He sent His Son into the world to redeem man from his sins and to reconcile him to God.

6. Christ is not only the Redeemer of men, He is also the ever-living Word, the Revealer of God, and the express image of His substance.

7. In His unique person Jesus Christ is God's Son; "The first born among many brethren," and our elder brother. Those who know Him, know God: for He is the effulgence of the Father's glory, and the express image of his substance. He is the living expression of the thought God had in mind when he said, "Let us make man in our own image."

8. The earthly body of man is mortal and must die; the man himself is immortal, and death is nothing more than transition from the earthly and temporal to the heavenly and eternal. The spiritual life and the spiritual kingdom are eternal, whereas the earthly is already passing away.

9. In His good time and way God will effect the consummation of his purpose. When that occurs the glory of Christ shall be seen by all men; and He shall be acknowledged by them as King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

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10. As a prelude to the complete establishment and sway of the kingdom of God, the great and final Judgment of all men and angels shall be held, in which the Lord Jesus Christ shall sit as Judge. The believing and obedient shall then receive their reward, and enter into the fulness of the blessedness prepared for them. And those who remain impenitent and rebellious shall depart from the gracious presence of the Lord to reap the just reward of their unrepented sins.

The Bible has validated its claim to be the message of God to men more particularly by its results. Before anyone can know its worth he must obey its teachings. "If any man willeth to do my will, he shall know —." "O taste, and see that the Lord is good." Note what happens to the individual who sincerely believes the Bible, and obeys its directions, and thereby accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour! He changes; he becomes a new man; as he progresses in the Christian faith he becomes more and more God-like. Even more impressive as a testimony to the worth of the Scriptures is the effect they produce upon the communities and nations which receive them as the message of God to men. Compare Massachusetts with Mexico, or Britain with Spain. Why the enlightenment, power and progress of the one as compared with the ignorance,

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weakness and inertia of the other? To the one the Bible was the way of life, a treasure above price; to the other it was a proscribed book, to be burned whenever found.

It is an essential of the Christian faith to believe that God spake in olden times to the fathers through the prophets, and in these latter days through Jesus Christ His Son; and that the substance of his revelation has been recorded for us in the Holy Scriptures.

CHAPTER VI.

The God Revealed in Holy Scripture

REASON teaches us that everything that exists, animate or inanimate, the greatest worlds, the invisible electrons, atoms, ions, are parts of a cosmos; and the cosmos is a universe, designed in harmony with one great plan, and governed by one supreme will. Each world bears a definite relationship to every other world, and influences or is influenced by them. In like manner every living being is linked by the invisible and inescapable bonds of a common life to every other human being. "No man liveth to himself," no man can live to himself even when he tries, "And no man dieth to himself."

How incomprehensible the person whose wisdom is equal to such a design, and whose power is sufficient to carry it through. We cannot doubt His existence; for His works declare His power and glory. Reason compels us to believe that He is, and that He is infinitely wise and powerful, and equally present in every part of his vast creation. We cannot, however, be satisfied with this; for we are moral creatures with a sense of right and wrong, with

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spiritual instincts and aspirations; and we wish to know whether this almighty person who has made us is also gracious and merciful, upright and good. Yet not one of the attributes referred to indicate His character; they in themselves are non-moral and could be used equally for good or evil. If we believed, or even had a slight suspicion, that the Maker and Ruler of the universe were evil and malignant or capricious, life would be a nightmare of horror. Every calamity, every case of misfortune and suffering would arouse our acutest fears, and life would be unendurable. On this account men naturally wish to have a trustworthy knowledge of the One with whom they have to do; and Christian people, believing that the Holy Scriptures contain the information they so earnestly desire, turn to them in reverent trust to learn what they have to teach us of God.

The Scriptures correct, confirm, and amplify what reason, nature and experience have taught us; and they make clear that God is one, unrivalled, supreme, infinite, eternal, unchangeable, all-wise, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, holy, just, faithful, long-suffering, gracious, merciful, and loving.

The universe postulates the unity of God; and the Scriptures spare no pains to impress this truth on the

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minds of all readers. They know only one God; all others, under whatever name, and however or wherever worshipped, are stigmatized as false, non-existent. This in spite of the fact that until after the Captivity only comparatively few of the people of Israel were strict monotheists. The gods of their heathen neighbors were given a large place in their worship, and at times, as in the reign of Ahab, they occupied the seats of honor in the Hebrew pantheon. In view of their habitual lapsing into polytheism the insistence of all their prophets, as well as all the teachings of Moses, upon the unity of God is the more remarkable. A reading of the following passages will help to make this clear: "That thou mightest know that Jehovah he is God; there is none else besides him." (Deut. 4:35) "See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me." (Deut. 32:39) "Thus saith Jehovah, . . . I am the first, and I am the last; and besides me there is no God." (Isaiah 44:6) "And this is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God." (John 17:3) "There is none other God but one." (I. Cor. 8:4) "One God and Father of all." (Eph. 4:6)

While the term infinite is seldom employed, the Scriptures invariably describe God as without limit in His being, and in His attributes. This will appear

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in the references that follow, and will be sufficient for this study:

HE IS ETERNAL.

"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." (Deut. 33:27)

"Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity."
(Is. 57:15)

"Unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible." (I. Tim. 1:17)

"From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." (Ps. 90:2)

HE IS UNCHANGEABLE.

"Of old didst thou lay the foundation of the earth;
And the heavens are the work of thy hands.

They shall perish, but thou shalt endure;

Yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment;

As a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed:

But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end."

(Ps. 102:25-27)

"I, Jehovah, change not; therefore ye, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed." (Mal. 3:6)

"Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning."

(James 1:17)

HE IS IMMENSE AND OMNIPRESENT.

"Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?

Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there;

If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there.

If I take the wings of the morning,

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And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea:
Even there shall thy hand lead me,
And thy right hand shall hold me." (Ps. 139:7-10)
"But will God in very deed dwell on the earth? behold,
heaven and the heaven of heavens can not contain thee."
(I. Kings 8:27)
"Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith Jehovah." (Jer. 23:24)

HE IS OMNISCIENT.

"Jehovah searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the
imaginations of the thoughts." (I. Chron. 28:9)
"He counteth the number of the stars;
He calleth them all by their names.
Great is our Lord, and mighty in power;
His understanding is infinite." (Ps. 147:4)
"The eyes of Jehovah are in every place,
Keeping watch upon the evil and the good."
"Sheol and Abaddon are before Jehovah;
How much more then the hearts of the children of men!"
(Prov. 15:3, 11)

"Are not five sparrows sold for two pence? and not one of
them is forgotten in the sight of God. But the very hairs
of your head are all numbered." (Luke 12:6-7)
"And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight:
but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him
with whom we have to do." (Heb. 4:13)

HE IS OMNIPOTENT.

"I am God Almighty." (Gen. 17:1)
"Thine, O Jehovah, is the greatness, and the power, and the
glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the
heavens and in the earth is thine." (I. Chron. 29:11)

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"I am Jehovah, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?" (Jer. 32:27)

"He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (Dan. 4:35)

"With God all things are possible." (Matt. 19:26)

"Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

(Rev. 19:6)

HE IS ALL-WISE.

Although the term all-wise is not employed, it is always understood or implied. He is called the God of wisdom; His Spirit is the Spirit of wisdom. Wisdom is always His gift, it proceeds from no other. Therefore, all wisdom and all the resources of wisdom are His.

"The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth." (Prov. 3:19)

"I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions. The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old." (Prov. 8:12)

"He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion." (Jer. 10:12)

"Wisdom and might are his. He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that have understanding."

(Dan. 2:20, 21)

"According to the riches of his grace, which he made to abound toward us in all wisdom." (Eph. 1:7-8)

The attributes thus far mentioned are exceedingly important; for unless God possessed them to an infinite degree, He would be to that extent limited, and

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imperfect. Yet not one of them is either moral or immoral. To say that God is infinite does not necessarily mean that He is just; and one could be omnipotent without also being all-merciful. Furthermore, they are such as reason should lead us to infer to be characteristic of the Maker and Governor of the universe, and we expect to find them in any revelation which tells of God. Since they may be inferred from knowledge within Man's range, they are always taken for granted by the Scriptures, and there is no attempt to prove them; proof being considered unnecessary. If, however, we had to stop here the thought of God could give us neither comfort nor hope. How grateful, then, we should be to God for having given us a revelation that tells us He is holy, just, and true, long-suffering, gracious, and merciful, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, in Himself and above all other attributes or qualities, is Love.

HE IS HOLY

"Who is like unto thee, O Lord? glorious in holiness."

(Ex. 15:11)

"Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts." (Is. 6:3)

"Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy." (Is. 57:15)

"Thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel."
(Ps. 22:3)

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"Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou are holy." (Rev. 15:4)

HE IS JUST.

"All his ways are justice:

A God of faithfulness and without iniquity,
Just and right is he." (Deut. 32:4)

"To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice." (Prov. 21:3)

"Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints."

(Rev. 15:3)

HE IS TRUE AND FAITHFUL.

"Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations." (Deut. 7:9)

"Ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof." (Josh. 23:14)

"Thy truth reacheth unto the clouds." (Ps. 108:4)

"Who keepeth truth forever." (Ps. 146:6)

"He is faithful that promised." (Heb. 10:23)

HE IS MERCIFUL.

"Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." (Is. 55:7)

"Thy mercy is great unto the heavens." (Ps. 57:10)

"Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy unto all that call upon thee." (Ps. 86:5)

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"The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." (Jas. 5:11)

HE IS LONG-SUFFERING.

"Jehovah, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in loving-kindness and truth." (Ex. 34:6)

"A God full of compassion, and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth." (Ps. 86:15)

"God is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

(II. Peter 3:9)

HE IS GOOD.

"The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." (Ps. 33:5)

"O taste, and see that the Lord is good." (Ps. 34:8)

"The goodness of the Lord endureth continually."

(Ps. 52:1)

"None is good, save one, that is God." (Luke 18:19)

"He is kind unto the unthankful, and to the evil."

(Luke 6:35)

HE IS OUR REDEEMER.

"Salvation belongeth unto the Lord." (Ps. 3:8)

"The Lord is my light and my salvation." (Ps. 27:1)

"The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants." (Ps. 34:22)

"Our God is the God of salvation." (Ps. 68:20)

"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee." (Is. 44:22)

"Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid." (Is. 12:2)

"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." (I. Tim. 2:3-4)

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GOD IS LOVE.

"The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the Lord loved you, and he will love you and bless you." (Deut. 7:7)

"Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." (Jer. 31:3)

"God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8)

"God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God: and such we are." (I. John 3:1)

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God: and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent his only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him."

(I. John 4:7, 8, 9, 16)

CHAPTER VII.

God Is Our Father

IT is sometimes thought that because God is our Creator He is therefore our Father; this is erroneous. It would be just as reasonable to say that a carpenter is the father of the chairs he makes. God is the Creator of the rocks and the trees, but it would be absurd to say, He is their father. He is also the Creator of the cobra, the tiger, and the hog, but surely He is not the father of the deadly snake, nor of the bloodthirsty tiger, nor of the filthy hog. Fatherhood implies similarity of nature in father and children; and in its strictest usage it also implies unity of life. The life of the child is the life which it derived from its parents; a part of themselves which they have handed on.

Although each new personality is a distinct entity, and in one sense independent of the parent life; yet, in another sense, equally important and equally true, children are nothing more than the multiplied life of their parents. It is therefore perfectly correct for one to say that in his earthly inheritance and body he is Adam. Nay more, it would also be true to say

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that he is the expression of something of all his ancestors back to Adam. It is also a blessed fact that, through the operation of the grace of God, the one who receives Christ as Lord and Saviour becomes a new creature. Genetically he is no longer Adam; he has become Christ: for the Christ mind and the Christ Spirit are his; and in due time he shall be the possessor of a body of glory similar to the glorious body of Christ. The Fatherhood of God is a spiritual relationship, not physical; in ourselves, and of ourselves, we are of the earth earthy until the divine Spirit breathes within us.

Father and children possess a common nature and share a common life. However much they may differ, there are traits, qualities, characteristics, that are so nearly alike that it is easy for an observer to note the family likeness. By nature we are indeed kindred to the tiger and the ape; and therefore possessed of animal desires and passions. If, then, we become the children of God, and are enabled to call Him Father, something more than that which we call nature is required: for it is a lifting up into a new life, a new nature, and a new world; the gift is God's. This is a marvelous phenomenon, yet it is a living reality verified in the lives of thousands, nay, of millions of people. We see and have seen men rising above the beast through the indwelling of the

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Holy Spirit, and showing in their lives the grace and the lovingkindness of God. The evolutionary hypothesis does not provide for, nor even contemplate, the children of men becoming the children of God. It is based on a materialistic philosophy; and the attempts to spiritualize it were an after-thought. In its logical form, as expressed by its clearest and most authoritative exponents, it ignores or denies the most potent forces in the making and development of mankind, i.e., the spiritual.

According to Christ's philosophy, "It is the spirit that giveth life; the flesh profiteth nothing." A material philosophy rules out of consideration all spiritual influences, and potencies; it postulates for man only such possibilities as are inherent in matter. It insists that the beginnings of all things were in matter, and that all the developments of the future are bound up with and limited to the possibilities of matter. Therefore, according to this school of thought, man is forever bound by the limitations of the flesh, and need never hope or strive for anything beyond it. His instinct for immortality, the hunger and thirst of his soul for God, are only illusions to be sternly discouraged: for the wise man knows their vanity and accommodates himself to the realities of this life, and refuses to permit ideals to determine his actions which do not serve his present interests

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and pleasures. However skilfully the tenets of this school are set forth, whatever its denials, its only conclusions are that man is brother to the tiger and the ape, and that the chief end of man is self-expression, which is only a euphenism for selfishness. A disguise alters appearances, it alters nothing else; but it permits the person or thing disguised to pass for a longer or shorter time for something or someone they are not: and so, in spite of all denials, the materialistic philosophies, however expressed, pander to the lowest in man, and never call him to the highest. How different the outlook and the life of one who believes only in materialism and one who is convinced that he is a son of God the Father Almighty.

The God revealed through the prophets and through Jesus Christ calls us His children; and the Scriptures which contain the substance of the revelation given tell us in the plainest terms that we are more than children of the dust, more than brother to the beast (although by nature we are that and nothing more); we are the children of God, and when we shall see Him we shall be like Him. Our Lord taught His disciples to regard God as their Father; and He exhorted them to live uprightly and to deal kindly with all men because of this relationship. "I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray

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for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." (Matt. 6:44-45)

St. Paul presents the Christian philosophy clearly and effectively in his letter to the Romans. "So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh: For if ye live after the flesh, ye must die; but if by the Spirit ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God. For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." (Rom. 8:12-17) In this epistle, as in the epistles to the Corinthians, to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, and to the Philippians, he re-echoes the great affirmation of his glorious Master, that the believer is truly a child of God. St. John, the writer of Hebrews, and the writer of the Apocalypse taught the same relationship. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. . . . Beloved, now are we children of God." (I. John 3:1-2)

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It is an essential of the Christian faith that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is also the Father of all who believe and obey Him; and that when His work of grace in men is accomplished, they shall be like Him; and the children of God shall be God-like in their nature and attributes.

CHAPTER VIII.

Jesus, Saviour of Men

THAT Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Saviour of men is in many respects the great essential of the Christian faith: for it determines what we believe concerning God and concerning man. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has qualities which distinguish Him from all others. In other religions there is an almighty God, supreme, absolute ruler, infinite in His perfections; but in not one of them is He the gracious and all-compassionate Father revealed through Jesus Christ. In no other religion is it thought for a moment that the ultimate symbol of God in his relationship to men is love. It could be true in no other.

Next to the Christian faith the Jewish religion is the highest known today, but it is narrow, provincial; it is not now, and never was, intended to be a catholic religion. The great prophets of Israel had glimpses of the kingdom of God, universal in extent and eternal in duration, and persecution and death was the reward of their vision. The mass of the people would not believe that God could love anyone

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who was not a Jew. It fostered prejudice, and a narrow pride, and a dislike for other peoples, which is the scourge of the Jew to this day: for by the necessary operation of eternal law they are reaping as they have sown. Any other group or nation who arrogated to themselves a lien on the divine favor would soon be heartily disliked by outsiders. If our Jewish brethren would see that this, and not any racial or national or even religious feeling, is the cause of the unpopularity they complain of, it would help them to recognize how intolerable their own attitude is to the non-Jewish people.

The Mohammedan religion knows only one God, and he is inexorable as fate. Mohammed lived on a distinctly lower plane than the Hebrew prophets, and the religion he founded has all the defects of its great prophet. His god, and the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, bear little resemblance to each other. It may be granted that Mohammed in his ignorance was searching after God; and that he arrived at one great truth, the unity of God; and likewise discovered other truths of beauty and value; but the religion is as sensual and unjust as its founder. Jesus Christ in his unique personality is the great Revealer of God and the one and only Redeemer of men. Without Him we cannot know God,

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neither can we know man. Until the light of His presence illumines we remain in darkness.

Reference has been made to the attributes of God, (pp. 53-59) and at times men have attempted to draw comparisons between them. This, however, is beyond man's power: for God is infinite in all His perfections and incomprehensible as to the greatness of His being. Nevertheless, as Christians we have come to know that so far as the children of men are concerned, the one attribute which we prize above all others is His love. We rejoice in the thought that He is infinite and eternal in power, wisdom, knowledge, and justice, but if this were all we knew of God it could bring only terror; *the one source of our hope, we have no other and can have no other, is in the love of God.*

What man that ever lived dared invoke the justice of God to decide his destiny? Has there ever been one so pure in heart that he could stand without shame in the presence of the Divine holiness? Only one, the perfect man, the God-man, Jesus. The vision of God arouses to a consciousness of sin. A man who does not know God may be very well pleased with himself; like the Pharisee in the parable, he may be able to stand by himself and give thanks that he is not as other men; but the man who has come to know God as revealed through Jesus

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Christ recognizes the hopelessness of his attempting to stand in the presence of that glory, unless one mighty to save comes to his aid and frees him from his defilement, and bestows upon him the grace that is sufficient to cover every sin. When we see ourselves as we are in God's sight we are overwhelmed with shame and lost in despair: for we desire Him with an inutterable yearning, but between us there is a great gulf fixed which no power or skill of man can bridge over. Our fondest hopes are vain, our best efforts are futile; and we can only stand helpless and despairing until we hear the voice which says, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world should be saved through him." If when we hear this word we believe Him true who has spoken, and trust Him, and do His will, we shall receive power to become the children of God, and know the peace which passeth understanding.

A great deal of controversy has raged over questions concerning the person, message and mission of Jesus. Much of this was and is necessary and natural; men have had and always will have an insatiable curiosity regarding the one absolutely unique personality the world has ever known. To attempt

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to summarize these would be a formidable task and would be of little service to the present undertaking. One point, however, ought to prove re-assuring to those who through lack of historical perspective are alarmed by the energetic discussions of today, i.e., that every single phase of these discussions was gone over and over hundreds of years ago; and some of the ideas proclaimed as most modern were dealt with in the first few centuries of the church. As children of God we desire to walk in the light of truth, and so far from seeking to quench the spirit of honest earnest enquiry, we welcome it: for we are confident that as Moses and the prophets testified of Jesus Christ in the past, so all the verified findings of science in the present shall contribute to the praise of his glory.

Who is Jesus? This is an old question, one very much debated during the days of His ministry in the flesh, and one that is causing much searching of hearts today. Our missionaries to the people of Asia and Africa know that it is being asked in all earnestness by millions of Mohammedans, Hindus, Buddhists, and Confucianists. The answers vary, as they always have done since the question was first asked. Here are some of the answers given: "Now when Jesus came into the parts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Who do men say that

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I, the Son of Man, am? And they said, Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven." Every answer pays Him some tribute; even those who have not yet learned to recognize Him as their Lord, acknowledge that He stands apart from men in the purity of His life, the wisdom of His teachings, and the loveliness and power of His personality. He approved Peter's answer, and blessed him for giving it; and all Christians, of every shade of doctrinal opinion, join with St. Peter in saying, "Thou are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

If Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, how did He become man? The origin of life remains a mystery. Scientists can describe its manifestations in the animal and vegetable worlds; but what it is, where it came from, how it is produced, have not yet been discovered. There have been many attempts to solve the riddle, but no scientist can accept any theory as correct until it has been proven sound; and there is only one way to prove the soundness of

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any theory: to test it and see how it works. Up to the present time no man has demonstrated his power to create life. Such claims have been made, but not one has stood the test, and not one has been accepted by scientists as valid. But although the origin of life remains a mystery, life itself is the greatest of all facts; and the phenomena of life the most interesting of all studies. It is well to keep this in mind when considering the question, How did Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, become man? for it is forgetfulness of the facts that usually leads to confusion and error.

All who accept St. Peter's answer to the question, Who is Jesus? will recognize that in Jesus we come face to face with a new creation, one who represents an entirely new order. St. Paul understood the implications of this fact when he wrote, "As in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. So also it is written, The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit." (I. Cor. 15:22, 45) No rational being can do otherwise than believe that all life is from God, although he knows nothing of the method by which it has been conveyed to this earth. From Adam we derive our earthly being and our inheritance as sons of men. Physiology teaches how the physical life is conveyed and maintained. From Christ, the second

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Adam, first of a new order, we derive the spiritual life whereby we become the children of God. Revelation teaches us that this spiritual life, which is nothing less than the life of God in man, is conveyed by means of the Holy Ghost, the life-giving Spirit. Is there any reason for surprise, then, to read the accounts of the birth of Jesus given by St. Matthew and St. Luke? Both tell us with the utmost exactness that He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem of Judea. This is the only explanation that harmonizes with the character and person of our Lord—He is God-begotten, and in a strictly spiritual sense; there is nothing carnal in the relationship he sustains to the Father and to the Holy Spirit. St. John writes, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

St. Paul does not refer to the manner of His birth, but in all his epistles he stresses the unique and eternal relationship he sustains to the Father. "When the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law; that we might receive the adoption of sons." (Gal. 4:4) All the New Testament writers are evidently in

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agreement with St. Matthew and St. Luke that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary.

Christ came to earth with a message and a mission. He called on men to repent of their sins, and to bring forth fruit meet for repentance, and to be born again of the Holy Spirit unto an eternal life in the kingdom of God. His message is the call of God to men to trust Him, and to accept the forgiveness offered through His Son to all who truly repent of their sins. God's love for men is the central theme of His message.

His mission was to redeem men from their sins, to reconcile them to God, to make them partakers with Him of the divine nature, and co-heirs of God's eternal kingdom. In the fulfilment of His mission He became man. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." This was the first step, and until it was taken, none of the others were possible. It is extremely singular that the Incarnation, in itself, is very seldom given the attention its importance warrants. It is a cause of chagrin and regret that Christians should ever have allowed themselves to hold the fact of the Incarnation in so light esteem, because of the bitter controversies which have raged over the mode in which it was effected. That God became man is a fact of primary importance, and its signifi-

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cance is incalculable. It was the beginning of a new creation, of a new order of men, as much so as the creation of the first man, Adam. Compared with the fact, the mode is relatively unimportant. He became man, that we might become the children of God.

He took the second step in subjecting Himself to the law and fulfilling all its requirements. That is, He took upon Himself all the obligations of our manhood, and discharged them completely. "Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfil." (Matt. 5:17)

The third step was His crucifixion and death. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." (Gal. 3:13) "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh, I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me." (Gal. 2:20)

In the fourth step He remained under the power of death for a time, and was buried. "Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades." (Rev. 1:17-18)

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The fifth step was His resurrection, when He broke the power of death for ever, and brought life to light, and led captivity captive. "Now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of them that are asleep. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection from the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." (I. Cor. 15:20)

The sixth step was His ascension to the right hand of the majesty on high, and His enthronement above all principalities and powers and dominations in heaven and on earth. "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth." (Matt. 28:18) "And what the exceeding greatness of his power . . . which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (Eph. 1:19-23) "He is Lord of lords, and King of kings." (Rev. 17:14)

All these have been accomplished, and shall not be repeated; but there remains the one great step by

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which He will consummate the salvation of mankind, and inaugurate in the fulness of its glory his everlasting kingdom of holiness, truth, and love. That final act will be His parousia, or epiphany, when He shall appear in the glory of the Father to judge the living and the dead, to make an end of all unrighteousness, and to reward every man according to his deeds. (Matt. 16:27), (Matt. 13:39-43) "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

"In the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

CHAPTER IX.

The Holy Spirit a Person

BELIEF in the Holy Spirit is an essential article of the Christian faith, and one of greater importance than is generally recognized. Is not the greatest weakness of the Christian church of the present day due to the slight honor, even neglect, given the blessed Holy Spirit? Except in knowledge of the term, far too many of our church members are in the condition of the disciples in Ephesus, who, in replying to a question of St. Paul, said, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Spirit." There is always a tendency to exaggerate the value of any person or any thing that has won our regard, at the expense of someone or something equally important. This explains most of the divisions in Christendom, they represent exaggerations that are often grotesque and untrue; and in every case they lead to a depreciation of doctrines and practises fully as important as those most prized. For example, there are people so greatly concerned over the plans of God relating to the future, that

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they never seek to know what God's plans for them today are; and they neglect their present duties and opportunities shamefully. They are so absorbed in contemplation of the bliss that shall be theirs at the parousia of the Lord Jesus that they do not recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit in the world to-day as the representative of the God-head. Consequently they dishonor Him by the slights they place upon Him, and their refusal to hear His voice. What a transformation would be effected in our churches, and by means of our churches in the world, if only Christian people were filled with the Spirit of God! If our claims to discipleship were attested by the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives their testimony would be incontrovertible and convincing.

The Holy Spirit is as distinctly a person as either God, the Father, or Jesus Christ, the eternal Son; and it is wrong to think of Him merely as an influence or instrument or agency. To do so is to belittle One to whom we owe much more than we imagine. In his dealings with men three attributes stand out very distinctly: patience, gentleness, love. The epithets and symbols used to describe Him emphasize His gentleness. In more than one place there is reference to the wrath of God the Father, and the wrath of the Lamb, but not one to the wrath of the

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Holy Spirit. The dew, the gentle rain descending upon the mown grass, the soft winds which cool the fevered brow, and the dove, are some of the figures used to describe Him. He is keenly sensitive to the treatment given Him by men. "But they rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit." (Is. 63:10) St. Paul warned against grieving the Spirit. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, in whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption." (Eph. 4:30) Other qualities further indicating personality will be referred to later; these two indicate his gentleness. We can vex Him by our indifference, and grieve Him by our sins; but it is for our sakes He is hurt, because He is so anxious to lift us into the high levels of spiritual life in Christ Jesus, where we may enjoy communion with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and all the blessings which are associated with it.

The age in which we are living is quite appropriately spoken of as the Dispensation of the Holy Spirit, during which He, as the eternal executive of the Divine Will, is entrusted with the responsibility of carrying onward to its consummation the work of the kingdom inaugurated by the Lord Jesus. When Jesus ascended to the throne of the majesty on high, the Holy Spirit was sent to carry on the redemptive process to its fulfilment.

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His names and activities tell who and what He is. He is called the Spirit of life, the Spirit of power, the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of holiness, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of self-control, the Spirit of liberty, the Spirit of adoption, the Spirit of love.

The work of the Holy Spirit is exceedingly varied. He endues men with the necessary qualifications for the service to which they are called; and for what are usually termed secular activities, as well as for spiritual. "See I have called by name Bezalel . . . and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship." How it honors plain, honest, everyday work to remember that God's Spirit is given men to enable them to become skilled craftsmen; and that service in field, factory, or mine, may be just as truly God's service as the worship of the sanctuary. His Holy Spirit will guide us in the one just as in the other, if we will accept His counsel and do all to the glory of God. One's place in the kingdom of God may depend just as much on the fidelity with which he polished shoes or scrubbed floors as upon the activities spoken of as purely spiritual. Some such endowment is expected for the great undertakings, the almost super-human

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tasks, and we are not surprised to read that when Moses had been told that the time had come for him to relinquish the high office he had discharged so faithfully through forty years of devoted service, he prayed God to appoint his successor, that Israel might have a God-given leader. His request was granted.

“And Jehovah said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua, the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay thy hand upon him.” (Num. 27:18) It was the Spirit of God who inspired such men as Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson, to lead their oppressed fellow-tribesmen into liberty. He endues the men who do the great things for humanity, the wise, the heroic, the God-like; and He also equips humble men and women to discharge faithfully the common duties of everyday life as their God-appointed service.

He spoke in olden times to men through the prophets; and it was the inspiration of His presence which taught them what to say. Had they depended on their own wisdom and understanding, or upon their own feelings, their messages would have been meaningless and empty. Every true prophet spake as he was moved by the Holy Spirit. (II. Peter 1:21)

He is the Lord and Life-Giver. Jesus said,

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“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he can not enter into the kingdom of God.” (John 3:5) The children of God are born of the Spirit. He is also spoken of as God’s agent in creation. “Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created.” Most important of all in this connection, when the time came for the Lord Jesus to be born into the world, it was by the power of the Spirit that He became man. (Matt. 1:18-20) (Luke 1:35)

CHAPTER X.

Operations of the Holy Spirit

THE place and influence of the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus Christ is a subject of great interest and importance. He endued Him for His Messianic mission. This was seen in the Incarnation. At His baptism the Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove, while a voice from heaven said, "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased." (Matt. 3:16-17) After his baptism it was the Spirit who led Him into the wilderness to face the Tempter and his temptations. "And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led in the Spirit in the wilderness during forty days, being tempted of the devil." (Luke 4:1-2) It was in the power of the Spirit that He began to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God. "And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee. . . . And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and he entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And he

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opened the book, and found the place where it was written.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.

Because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor : He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. And he began to say unto them, Today hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears." (Luke 4:14, 19, 21)

There is nothing superfluous in God's economy; and from that we are well assured that the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Lord Jesus was necessary. If in His, how much more in ours! Our Lord understood this; He knew, and He knows all our needs, and He has provided for them all. Therefore He has sent us the Holy Spirit to be our Paraclete. The word Paraclete is usually translated Comforter, but it means far more than any single word in the English language is able to express. It means one called to one's side as a helper, advocate, intercessor, comforter. It will help to a truer appreciation of the ministrations of the Holy Spirit to keep in mind the wealth of meaning in this word.

He is the Comforter of the believer in all the trials and disappointments of life. He stays with him when every other friend has gone; and He heals

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the wounds which no human skill can assuage. The apostles were in the deepest dejection when the Lord announced that it was necessary for Him to leave them. They were dumbfounded, for He had laid the foundations of a kingdom which was to be universal in scope and everlasting in duration. How could it go on without Him? If He, their Master and Teacher, left them, what could they do? It was then in the midst of their bewilderment and depression that He gave them the promise of the Paraclete, the Comforter. "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth." (John 14:16-17)

The human friendship of the Lord Jesus had grown very dear to His disciples, so dear that they felt that life would be cheerless and empty without it. And the time was at hand when they should no longer see the dear familiar face, nor hear the well-loved voice, nor feel the loving pressure of His hand. How many people today have a similar feeling, that if only they could look into the face of Jesus, and hear His voice, and feel the touch of His hand, all would be well, every difficulty would vanish, and there would be fulness of peace and joy.

Perhaps someone whose life has become clouded with sorrow and loss feels that way now. If so, listen to what He said to His disciples when they

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showed the grief they felt at the news of His approaching departure: "Because I have spoken these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Paraclete will not come unto you." (John 16:6-7) This is His message for us today; He assures us that it is the truth. We may not be able to understand why it is better for us that He went away and sent the Paraclete; but we can believe that He knew, and that He spoke only the truth when he said, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away the Paraclete will not come to you." What, then, shall be thought of the blasphemous assertions so often heard, even in the churches, that the world has been handed over to the power of Satan, and that God has made him governor of the world during this present age? Is it not a form of rebellion to be dissatisfied with the ministrations of the Holy Spirit? To murmur at His administration because it is invisible and spiritual, and to importune God to gratify our senses by the unveiling of His glory, because we can find no satisfaction or joy in His Spirit, is an insult offered to the Triune God. If God were not infinitely gracious and forgiving He would have withdrawn His Holy Spirit long ago, and left us to ourselves. How thankful men should be that God

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reigns, and that He is with His people in the person of the Holy Spirit.

He is the teacher and interpreter of the truth, leading the believer into a continuously enlarging, and more accurate knowledge of the truth. His activities in this field have never been arrested, and never shall be arrested until our knowledge is perfected, and our understanding of the verities of the invisible world is complete. God, who spake through the prophets in olden times, and through His Son Jesus Christ in these latter days, still speaks to the children of men, through the faithful souls who keep silence before Him that they may catch the whisper of His voice. Through the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit believers are continuously being led into an ever-enlarging knowledge of the truth; truth already existent, but unknown, undiscovered, unrecognized, unappreciated, and unapplied, yet indispensable to the complete development of the children of God. "But the Paraclete, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you." (John 14:26) "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth." (John 16:13)

He supplies Christians with the credentials which enable them to represent Christ in the world. It is

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vital to the growth and prosperity of the kingdom that the rights of the King be acknowledged, and that men should accept Him as Lord and Saviour. The doubtful and the rebellious must be convinced that Jesus is Lord and King, and they will not or cannot believe unless His representatives prove the genuineness of His claims. Christ's followers are called to testify on His behalf; and they cannot do this convincingly without the Spirit's aid. He bears witness to the Lord Jesus as Messiah, Saviour, King; and He enables the believer to bear a true and convincing testimony. "But when the Paraclete is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, he shall bear witness of me: and ye also bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." (John 15:26-27) Jesus warned His disciples that opposition and persecution awaited them; and He instructed them not to depend on their own wisdom and power, but to commit themselves to the guidance of the Spirit. "When they bring you before the synagogues, and the rulers, and the authorities, be not anxious how or what ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: for the Holy Spirit shall teach you in that very hour what ye ought to say." (Luke 12:11-12)

Part of His office as Paraclete is continual intercession for the saints; He prays for them without

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ceasing, and He teaches them to pray. "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered; and he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." Since it is according to God's will, it is also part of His plan.

"We know not what we should pray for as we ought." It is pathetically true that there are prayers so unworthy of the one praying, and so contrary to the goodness and wisdom of God, that they are best forgotten. Even worse are the prayers in which men direct God to do their will, by carrying out their plans, and being guided by their wisdom. Worst of all are the prayers which imply that if only God would do His part, and do this or that, all would be well; and the sorrows and troubles of the world would be ended. In effect they say, "Lord, why do You not get busy, You are holding up everything; we are waiting for You; we cannot have the blessedness we desire, because You will not work."

Such prayers are presumptuous and impious; and they misrepresent the facts. How strange that most prayers of this nature are offered by people who pride themselves upon their spiritual attainments.

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This, however, ought not to be surprising: for when people pride themselves upon being more spiritual than others it is an indication that they do not know what spirituality means. Even today a group who make up in aggressiveness what they lack in understanding, delight in bewailing the evils which they imagine; and their highest and most honored spiritual exercise consists in calling upon God to manifest Himself in a sensuous and cataclysmic demonstration of His power, utterly ignoring the presence and work of the Holy Spirit.

Doubtless you have heard men pray, "Lord, send us Thy Holy Spirit?" This is an impious and presumptuous prayer; and one that questions the integrity of the Father, and our Lord Jesus. Even when based on sheer ignorance, it is an evil and inexcusable ignorance. Did not our Lord say to His disciples, "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete, that he may be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth"? Was He deceiving them when He made that promise? Was not the Holy Spirit given in His fulness on the day of Pentecost? Is He not in the world today as the Regent of God's kingdom? Has He been withdrawn? Does the Father give the Spirit by measure? For any person in this age to pray, "Lord, send us Thy Holy Spirit,"

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betokens an ignorance that should be inexcusable, or an insolence that insults God by disregarding the clearest teachings of the Holy Scriptures.

Christ's promise was fulfilled; the Holy Spirit was given on the day of Pentecost; He is in the world today carrying on to its consummation the work begun by the Lord Jesus. Why, then, pray to God to do what He has already done, in fulfilment of His promise? Why bewail our weakness, our failures, and our sins, and try to saddle the blame on God, by saying in our hearts, that if only God would do this or that, all would be well. Why the insolent assertion, "Lord, we are waiting for You. We can do nothing more, we have done all we can. Delay no longer, please act, and act quickly, or everything will go to ruin"? He has done all that He can do—and continue to treat us as reasonable creatures, and free moral agents. He has given us all that He can give: for all the resources of God are at our disposal now. The Holy Spirit is with us as our Paraclete all the time. If this is so, why the undoubted weakness, and failure, and sin? Someone has fallen far short; who is responsible? No intelligent person need ask that question; the facts are too obvious.

We ourselves are responsible for all the failures and evil that exist; we cannot honestly shift the

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blame on anyone else, or on anything else. We have not allowed our Paraclete to help us; we have declined His counsel, and rejected His aid; and the infinite resources placed at our disposal have been unused, and have not been recognized as existent. We are like the sailors on board a sailing ship in the old days. They had been so tossed by storms that they had been unable to reach port, and had lost their reckoning; they did not know where they were. To add to their distress, the water supply had been exhausted, and they were suffering grievously from thirst. While they were wondering what would be the end of it all for them another ship was sighted, and they hastened to run up the flags which signalled, "We are dying of thirst, give us water." The other ship never altered her course, and her only response to the piteous appeal was to signal in return, "Dip your buckets overboard, and draw, and drink." Some of the more hasty-tempered cursed the heartlessness of the men who could pass them in their need with a cruel taunt. Others who were more thoughtful said, "Let us try it anyhow." So the buckets were dipped in the water that floated their ship, and they drew them aboard filled, and drank pure fresh water, and their thirst was completely slaked. While they had been suffering all the pangs of thirst the fresh pure water of the

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estuary of the Amazon was all around them. It is time to stop all this talk about spiritual hunger and thirst and weakness, while we are surrounded by all the resources of infinite grace, wisdom, power, and love. Stop lamenting, let down your buckets, and draw and drink.

Another point in this connection. When we feel the emptiness and impotence of our lives; and know nothing of the love, and joy, and peace, which are the rightful portion of every believer; do not think for a moment that God has deceived you, or somehow has failed. Take an inventory of your life; note what fills your heart and occupies your activities; and doubtless you will find the reason why the Holy Spirit has no large place in your life. How can He fill a life that is already crowded to overflowing with trifles—trash that you are not willing to throw out, in order to make room for Him? He is omnipresent as the air; wherever He can find an entrance, He enters; and whenever He is given a welcome, he abides. Whoever is willing to heed the voice of His counsel is guided inerrantly into the fullness of the abundant life, and the perfect liberty of the children of God. “Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (I. Cor. 3:16) Know ye not as to your

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own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you? unless indeed ye be reprobate." (II. Cor. 13:5)

Do not ask God to send His Holy Spirit, for He is here. Do not implore His aid as something very greatly desired, but denied you; He is the Paraclete. Let us rather open the doors of our hearts to receive Him, and rid ourselves of everything that is offensive to Him, and unworthy of us as children of God. Nothing gives Him greater delight than our willingness to receive Him; if we will enter into His fellowship He will lavish the treasures of His grace upon us.

CHAPTER XI.

The Spirit Perfects Believers

FOR convenience we may speak of the work the Holy Spirit is carrying on in the world today under two headings. What He is doing for, with, and in unbelievers. What He is doing for, with, and in believers. His work for, with, and in unbelievers comes first in point of time and order; and is not less important than His work for, with, and in believers: for until the Holy Spirit has entered into one's life he remains spiritually dead in trespasses and in sin. While in this state he can experience neither conviction of sin and repentance, nor adoption as children of God, nor sanctification. No man ever became a Christian, and no man can become a Christian, until he is born of the Holy Spirit. Jesus answered Nicodemus, "Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he can not enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3:5)

The Spirit-born soul awakes to a sense of sin, and becomes conscious of its vile and deadly nature. It also awakes to the beauty of holiness and to the adorable perfections of God manifested in Jesus

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Christ. Being Spirit-born it abhors the one and desires the other; it hungers and thirsts for God with an ineffable desire; and the more it desires God the more hateful, and the more unpardonable sin becomes to it. Who is to cleanse it from defilement? Who can secure forgiveness for sins committed against One who is Love? Who can supply all that is needed before the soul can stand in the presence of the divine glory without shame? It is here the Spirit, as a fostering mother, comes to the aid of the newly-born soul, and leads to Christ the Saviour, through whom is mediated forgiveness of sins, and the gift of God's love, whereby through adoption it is received into the family of God as one of God's own children. As in the beginning the Spirit of God brooded over the dark, dead earth, replacing its waste and emptiness with life and beauty, so today He moves in the hearts of men dead in trespasses and in sins, and quickens them into life, and to all the possibilities of life as children of God.

In all that has been referred to we see a continuous interweaving of the work of the Lord Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit; the one is complementary to the other. Without the service of the Holy Spirit the redemptive process is not complete. To deal with this adequately is beyond the range of

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the present undertaking, but from one standpoint we might describe their respective roles in the process of redemption by saying, Jesus supplies all that we need, and the Holy Spirit applies it. In this as in all other things dealing with the God-head, let us humbly remember that every system of philosophy, and every figure of speech, is utterly insufficient when applied to a subject which transcends imagination. In the presence of the Light of lights the very sun is black as sackcloth. Compared with the divine wisdom our most assured knowledge is vanity, and our highest wisdom folly. In these profound subjects we can go only so far as He leads us; we can know only what His Spirit teaches us.

Having effected regeneration through His indwelling, which is nothing less than the imparting of the God-life to man, and having led the awakened soul to a conviction of sin, and a desire for God; there remains the work of growth in grace, and knowledge, and holiness; all of which are part of the process spoken of as sanctification by evangelical Christians. The salvation of the believer is incomplete until the work of sanctification is perfected. This is a continuous growth God-ward, accompanied by a progressive death to sin. The two processes are simultaneous, as the believer grows in the grace

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and knowledge of our Lord Jesus he becomes more and more God-like; and the power of sin in his life atrophies, so that ultimately he loses the very desires which caused sin. This is the blessed experience of those who are led by the Spirit. It is He who perfects the believer, and prepares him to stand in the presence of the divine glory without spot or blemish in joy unspeakable. The eighth chapter of Romans throws a flood of light on this subject.

Redemption is more than forgiveness of sins: for if that were all it would be a ghastly travesty of justice, morality, and love. Forgiveness of sins unaccompanied by change of nature would in most cases lead to excess of evil. The act of forgiveness does not in itself regenerate; it is entirely unilateral. In the forgiveness of sin God alone is the agent. Regeneration is the birth of the soul of man in the image of God, through which the individual becomes partaker of the divine nature; and from which results a manifestation of God in the life of man. Birth, however, is only the beginning of life, and unless the latent possibilities are developed they die without ever having come to light.

There are few things more affecting than the sight of one who has attained the years of maturity while having only the body and mind of a child. The

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arrested development, the unrealized possibilities, when they occur in the spiritual life are even more pathetic. Yet how many there are who after many years in the Christian life seem to have made no progress. They indulge in the same prattle, which they call their testimony; and they also indulge in the prejudices of ignorance, and the passions of the flesh until senility kills desire. To prevent these spiritual tragedies the Paraclete continuously aids everyone who is willing to permit Him. Nothing can be clearer than that our Lord told His disciples that the Holy Spirit would come to them and complete the work of redemption, which is more than forgiveness of sins, more than adoption as heirs of God; and is rather the fulfilment of the purpose of God in man's creation, that men should be God-like, or like God. Before that is possible men must be endued with the new nature which is given in regeneration, and the new spirit, the Holy Spirit, and a new mind, the mind of Christ, and a new heart, a heart of love.

It is the office of the Holy Spirit, through the appointment of the Father and the Son, to guard, and guide, and ultimately perfect the believer. (Titus 3:4-7) He restrains from sin; He keeps the conscience tender and acute; and He constrains men

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God-ward. Conscience is the Spirit of God speaking to the soul of man. He also creates the desires, affections, moods, and impulses which cause men to seek after God. He offers His service to every son of Adam, and He keeps on offering His service until that fatal moment comes when in grief He reluctantly abandons the soul to its self-willed doom. (Gen. 6:3) Wherever received he enters and abides. (Acts 5:32) According to the promise of the Lord Jesus He leads the willing spirit into all the truth (John 16:13) and strengthens with power in the inner man. (Eph. 3:16) In all that He does He is carrying out the will and purpose of God. Whatever views may be held regarding man's response to the love of God, and co-operation with God in obedience to the truth, there can be no doubt that the work is most distinctly God's. He initiates by quickening into life; and He carries the new life so formed to its perfect development through the work of His Spirit. "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." (II. Thess. 2:13) Neither the plan, nor the power, nor the merit is ours. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the

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Holy Spirit, which He poured out upon us richly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.” (Titus 3:5-6)

Such being the work of the Holy Spirit, we naturally expect to see a great change in every Spirit-born and Spirit-governed life. Go back to page 81, and read again the names which indicate His activities as well as His nature, and you cannot escape the conviction that the one in whom the Spirit dwells will show something of the nature and quality of the Spirit which fills him. There is absolutely no warrant in Scripture for the divorcing of life from faith, which certain teachers advocate. There has been a strange revival of this, the Antinomian, heresy especially among those who regard themselves as ultra-orthodox; and as in the past its effects have been evil. All revelation is intended to teach the one supreme fact that God in His love and mercy has provided a means whereby the most wretched and the most guilty sinner may be cleansed from the defilement and power of sin, and re-created a new creature in Christ Jesus, the child and the heir of God. Every part of the process is important: for each part is necessary to the fulfilment of man’s redemption. And what is redemption, if it is not the salvation of the sinner, and his development in the spiritual life, until he attains the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ? (Eph. 4:13)

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To say that all that is required is the acceptance and belief of certain historical facts, and certain dogmas and formulas regarding the God-head, and that the life itself is of secondary importance, and of slight consequence, is a monstrous perversion of the gospel. (Jas. 2:19) The emphasis of the gospel is always on the new creation, the new creature, with new nature, and spirit, and mind; which certainly means a new life, with entirely new motives, and activities. St. Paul left no room for evasion or casuistry when he wrote, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties, envyings, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of which I tell you plainly, even as I did tell you plainly, that they who practise such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control; against such there is no law." (Gal. 5:19-23)

No fouler libel has ever been placed on the Christian religion than to say that its essential feature is belief in certain doctrines, or in obedience to ecclesiastical authority, and that the life is unimportant. According to the teachings of Jesus Christ and His apostles, the Christian faith is the positive convic-

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tion that God the Father in His love and compassion, through the atoning work of Jesus Christ His Son, and the sanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit, has given unto all who believe in their hearts the gospel message of God's love, a divine nature and an eternal life. The truth of this, and the proof of it, depends upon the God-likeness of the lives of the redeemed. There is no other proof; there can be no other. The truth or falsity of the gospel claims rests, not upon logic, nor upon the vehemence with which the claims are urged; there is no proof apart from the lives of believers.

All the teachings of the prophets, all the redemptive work of Christ, all the sanctifying activities of the Holy Spirit, all that the Holy Scriptures accomplish or teach, are but means to the one great end, that the purpose of God in man's creation shall be fulfilled, so that man shall live and move in the very likeness of his Creator. The value of any dogma, any doctrine, any rite, any system, is to be determined by their effects in men. If they do not help men God-ward, and to become God-like, they are vanity. Whatever fails to develop the God-life is worthless, so far as redemption is concerned.

All that believers have experienced, all that they have known of peace, and joy, and love, is only the

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earnest of what they shall enjoy. In older countries when men were hired for a given period, or for a given service, the contract was sealed by giving them a little cash which was known as the earnest money. After this had been given and accepted the contract as to time and terms of service was considered settled; and neither party could honorably break the agreement. The fruits of the Spirit in the experience of the believer are the seal of his redemption, and the earnest of his inheritance as a son of God.

CHAPTER XII.

The Holy Catholic Church

MOST of the errors into which writers and speakers have fallen when considering the Holy Catholic Church have been due to forgetfulness of the one great reality of the Christian faith, i.e., that the sole purpose and end of all revelation, of all that Jesus did or is doing as the Redeemer of mankind, and of all that has been done, and is being done for men by the blessed Holy Spirit, is the re-creation of men in the image of God. To say, as is so often said, that the redemptive process is for the glory of God contradicts the plainest, and the most wonderful, and the most precious teaching of all revelation, i.e., that God counted no sacrifice too great, no humiliation too exacting, if only He could redeem men from the guilt and power of sin; and regenerate them unto life eternal, His children and His heirs. (Phil. 2:5-8) And yet it is one of the blessed paradoxes of life that nothing so glorifies God in the sight of men and angels as the work of redemption. It is the one thing which above all

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others compels the whole creation to fall prostrate before Him in adoring awe and love.

Keeping the end in view we shall understand that the means are of value only insofar as they further God's redemptive purpose. The law given at Sinai, the word spoken through the prophets, the manifestation of God in the flesh, the crucifixion, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus, the enthronement of Jesus at God's right hand, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the day of Pentecost, and the abiding presence of the Spirit in the hearts of men, were and are only the means for the accomplishment of God's great end in men. It is futile to discuss whether other means equally efficacious could not have been found. If, however, anyone should insist on raising that question, let it be remembered that the means and the mode of salvation were selected by the all-wise and omniscient God. The materials or mechanics are always subordinate to the purpose of their use; and the greatness of the means employed should help us to understand the evaluation which God places upon the redemption of mankind. In His sight one soul outweighs in value the entire cosmos. (Matt. 16:26)

If we could only catch the significance of God's appraisal it would save us from one of the gravest dangers of this age, the over-valuation of the ma-

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terial and mechanical, and the consequent disparagement of the spirit, and the spiritual. Yet nothing has been more convincingly demonstrated than the truth of Christ's statement, "It is the spirit that giveth life; the flesh profiteth nothing." Without the living spirit to direct and use, the cosmos is an idle rubbish heap.

The truths pointed out ought to be self-evident, and it is because they are not that so many fall into the grievous error of assuming and believing that the Holy Catholic Church, which is the Body and the Bride of Christ, is restricted to or dependent upon a particular organization or institution. The Church is a spiritual body; in its nature, characteristics, and activities it is spiritual. If anyone really seeks to know the nature, characteristics, and functions of the Church, he must confine his search to the one authoritative source, the teachings of the Lord Jesus and His apostles; and firmly exclude from consideration the many theories of the different ecclesiastical groups. Should he fail to do this he will be misled by his prejudices and pre-conceptions.

No matter to which of the sects or churches he may belong, it is impossible for him to be insensible to its influence and to the claims it makes upon his affections which warp his judgment, unless he treats them all as non-existent, and studies the whole ques-

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tion as a beginner terribly in earnest to know exactly what the church is, what the church should mean to the world, and what the church should be doing in the world. To begin as is usually done by assuming that this or that organization is the church, or more nearly represents the church than any other, warps the enquiry at the very beginning, and the results are necessarily oblique.

What is the church? its nature? its characteristics? its functions? its object? Is it a particular ecclesiastical body? Can it truthfully be said that any one of the organizations known as churches is the church? Can it truthfully be said that all of the churches constitute the church? Frequently the church is spoken of as the kingdom of God on earth. If so regarded, it will be found to differ from all other kingdoms in that it is not of the earth, nor does it depend upon the things of the earth. (John 18:36) Its prosperity bears no relationship to wealth; its power is not exercised through laws, and commandments, and penalties; its authority does not depend upon force; its purpose is not to subjugate men to the bondage of an external and foreign rule. It is the reign of God in the lives of willing, loyal men, whose beginnings are in time, and continued through all eternity. Its treasures are the riches of grace. Its Regent is the Spirit of God dwelling in

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the hearts of its citizens, enlightening their minds, and guiding them into all truth. Its power is based on truth, justice, and righteousness. The only constraint employed in its service is the compulsion of divine love. Its purpose is to demonstrate the reality of God's redeeming grace, in lives that are adorned with the beauty of holiness, and radiant with the compassion and love of Jesus Christ, so that the glory of the goodness of God shall be seen by all men, commanding their homage, arousing their wonder, and winning their love, until God becomes all in all on earth as in heaven.

Reduced to the simplest terms, the Church is the innumerable company of the faithful people of God, who, in all lands and in all ages, have sought to know and to do the will of God. The names applied to it in the New Testament are enlightening; and of these the two most distinctive, most significant, and most cherished, are the Body of Christ and the Bride of Christ. As stated, it is often referred to as the kingdom of God or the kingdom of Christ; this, however, is not strictly correct. The kingdom includes the church, but the church is not all the kingdom. The interests of the two are identical; and, although distinct, they are inseparable. Whatever injures the church hurts the kingdom; whatever advances the kingdom builds up and strengthens the

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church. The kingdom includes angels, principalities, powers, thrones, dominions. . . . These are not in the church, although they serve the church.

Note carefully how St. Paul addressed the letters he wrote to the churches. The superscriptions that he used show that to him the terms church, faithful in Christ Jesus, and saints, are practically synonymous. "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth." "Unto the church of the Thessalonians." "Unto the churches of Galatia." "To all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints." "To the saints that are at Ephesus, and the faithful in Christ Jesus." "To all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." "To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ that are at Colossae." "To Philemon our beloved and fellow-worker . . . and to the church in thy house." Why did he write, "To the church of God which is at Corinth," and not to the church which is at Ephesus? He merely addressed himself "To the saints that are at Ephesus, and the faithful in Christ Jesus." Should we infer from the difference in the manner of address that there was no church in Ephesus recognized as such by St. Paul we should be in error.

The letter to the Christians in Ephesus was written from prison in Rome, years after he had founded

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a church in that great city. It is well known from the account given in Acts 20:17-38, that a church existed in Ephesus with bishops in office. What made the company of believers in Corinth, or in the house of Philemon, a church? Was it the forms they employed when they worshipped together? By no means: for there was no ritual in existence among Christians at that time. This is indicated by the reproof which St. Paul administered to the Corinthians for the disorder and confusion that often marked their meetings for praise and worship. (I. Cor. 14:1-40) Was it the building in which they met? one after an authorized plan, and duly set apart for its holy use by solemn rite and official blessing? No: for the early Christians had no special buildings for religious purposes. They met and worshipped God, and observed the Holy Communion of the Lord's Supper, in any place that was convenient and safe. In times of peace they met in the house of one of their number, as in the case of the church in the house of Philemon at Colossae, and the church in the house of Prisca and Aquila at Rome. In times of persecution and danger they met in caves, and dens, and catacombs. Was it subscription to an elaborate system of doctrine?

Again the answer must be no: for their only confession of faith was belief in Jesus Christ as God's

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Son and Saviour of men. Was it submission to the authority and guidance of one of the apostles whom they acknowledged as the Vice-Regent of God? Let St. Paul answer, and you will find that he held no such view. He refused to acknowledge that any of the apostles had any authority over him; he regarded himself as the equal of any of them. At Antioch he publicly rebuked Peter for the cowardice and insincerity he had shown in his dealings with the Jewish and Gentile Christians. (Gal. 2:11-16) All that St. Paul recognized and acknowledged in himself, and in the other apostles and preachers, so far as the church was concerned, was that he and they were ministers through whom the word of salvation was proclaimed. Was it their official rules of discipline and form of government? No: these were of very minor importance to the apostolic church. No one can doubt that the saints in Ephesus constituted a living, active, growing, holy apostolic church; although most of the accretions, which many have come to regard as the church itself, were lacking; and were not even thought of as important.

Those who make much of apostolic authority in the church can gain little comfort from reading the account of the first great meeting or assembly of the church at Jerusalem. (Acts 15:6-29) On that occasion the leader and spokesman was James the

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brother of our Lord. He pronounced what in his judgment was advisable; and his advice was followed. This James was not an apostle, so far as we can learn he did not believe on Jesus until after the resurrection; and yet he was the chief member of the church in Jerusalem, which at that time was acknowledged as having the primacy among the churches. St. Paul, the founder of Western Christianity, and the greatest of the line of great men who have served the Lord Jesus, was not an apostle, as the term is defined by those who claim inheritance of apostolic powers and privileges. If the theories of these people were confirmed, then the contention of the opponents of St. Paul is sustained: for the two groups so widely separated in point of time are one in spirit and practise.

Those who are primarily interested in the mechanics of the kingdom of God may deny the apostleship of St. Paul; from their standpoint he is certainly not an apostle, but who can deny his answer to the challenge of his enemies when he showed them the proofs of his apostleship? If the apostolate has been continued by God's appointment to this day, why do not those who claim to hold the office demonstrate the validity of their pretensions by exercising the powers conferred upon the apostles? The so-called apostolic succession cannot be accepted by intel-

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ligent and informed Christians until those who claim inheritance of apostolic powers and privileges prove their possession by ministering to the poor, championing the oppressed, dispelling the darkness of ignorance, healing the sick, casting out the evil spirits of covetousness and lust, giving sight to the blind, soundness to the leper, and life to the dead.

According to the New Testament the church is not an outward ecclesiastical organization borrowed from the forms of the Hebrew nation, or the Roman Empire, or any other human institution. Forms of government, rules of discipline, systems of theology, authority of clergy, etc., are incidental to the life of the church, subordinate to her interests, and should never be regarded as essentials. They may render a great service as helps, or inflict a grievous injury, but the church of the living God existed before any of them were even thought of; and shall be when they will mean no more to us than the furniture and decorations found in the tomb of Tut-ankh-amen. Within the Holy Catholic Church are to be found members of all religious sects, not because of their membership in the sect or church; but because through faith in the wisdom and mercy of God they have committed themselves to Him; and were translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Dogmas, discipline, and

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government are nothing more than the means used by the church to facilitate the accomplishment of the great task committed to her by the Lord Jesus. They are of value only insofar as they aid in her purpose. Should any one of them prove useless or injurious it is to be promptly discarded. This was true in the apostolic age, and it is equally true today.

In apostolic days the church meant the company of faithful people who accepted Jesus as Lord and Saviour. The divisions which have come to mean so much to Christendom did not exist. The exclusive claims which are now made by certain groups as the legal and spiritual successors of the apostles would have seemed to the apostles and their fellow-Christians an amazing failure to comprehend the nature, spirit and purpose of the church. As St. Paul asks of the Corinthians, "Who then is Paul? and who is Apollos? Ministers through whom ye believed; and each as the Lord gave to him." (I. Cor. 3:5) That was all. Until Christians learn to distinguish between what is vital and essential, and what is merely expedient at the time or helpful, they will fail to realize the unity in love which should characterize the body of Christ.

It is the exclusive claim which creates schism; and the exclusive claim is born of ignorance and self-love, and nourished by pride. No Christian needs

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to be told that these are not of God; they are manifestly of the evil one, and so is their offspring. They, and they alone, are the schismatics who refuse to have fellowship in the church, and in the kingdom of God, with anyone and everyone, no matter how Christ-like, who does not belong to their particular creed or church. The church is not any one of the organizations known as churches, nor is it all of them combined; it is the body of Christ, later to be His Bride. Whoever abides in Christ through faith and obedience is in the church. Whoever has not the mind and spirit of Christ, does not abide in Christ; and is therefore outside of the church. Love of God and love of men is the sole proof of the Christ-life, which stamps the one in whom it appears as a child of God and fellow-heir with Christ Jesus. If this manifestation of the divine life is missing in anyone, it matters not in the least how ancient, how powerful, how orthodox the church organization in which he is enrolled as a member; if he is not in Christ, he is not a member of the church which is His Body.

The church is a spiritual organization, and whatever is non-spiritual is extraneous. For her convenience and advantage she may use, and has used, particular forms and methods; but these do not constitute her the church. They mean no more to her

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and are of no more relative importance than the clothes a man wears or the house in which he dwells. She is at perfect liberty to use whatever forms and methods seem most advantageous; just as a man is at liberty to select from the houses available to him the one that he prefers, and whatever clothes best suit his taste and comfort. A man is a man whether he lives in the alley or on the avenue, and whether he dresses like a Hottentot or a Parisian dandy. These tell something of the kind of a man he is; the success he has attained in business, his preferences, his capacities, but they do not make him a man; on the contrary, because he is a man he makes and uses them. So it is with the church; she is above all forms and methods, while at the same time she is free to select and use any—that seem helpful.

The relationship of the church to Christ is as purely spiritual as the relationship of the Son to the Father and to the Holy Spirit. This relationship is absolutely independent of ecclesiastical machinery. Nothing seemed to anger Jesus more than the smug conceit of the "churchmen" of His day, that if they repeated the correct formulas, and observed the prescribed ritual, they need not be concerned about the greed, and uncleanness, and hatred they cherished in their hearts. It was the "churchmen" who determined on His death, because, like all the great

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prophets of every age and race, He was ever teaching that time, place, and ritual are only of minor importance in the worship of God. He minimized the mechanical, and magnified the spiritual; while to them, order and form, and ceremony were everything. His words to the woman of Sychar made plain the conditions of acceptable worship. "The hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem shall ye worship the Father. . . . God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:21, 24) Of all the followers of the Lord Jesus, none showed a more passionate devotion to the person, nor a more thorough understanding of the mind of the Master than St. Paul. His judgment of the value of ritual and sacraments is given in these memorable words: "Neither is circumcision anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." (Gal. 6:15) "I thank God I baptized none of you, save Crispus and Gaius. . . . For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel." (I. Cor. 1:14, 17)

These are not isolated passages, but rather they express the deepest conviction of Paul's soul. It is evident that so long as the churches he founded were faithful to his teaching and spirit they would attach no importance to questions of ecclesiastical precedence, and privileges, and forms, while on the other

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hand they would be intensely interested in the development of the Christ-life in the believer, and in the culture of the fruit of the Spirit.

The church consists of the faithful people of God, who in all lands, and in all ages have sought to know and to do His will. These constitute the body of Christ: for through them by the operation of the Holy Spirit the work of Christ in the world is now being carried on. The body has many members, and each member is intimately and vitally related to every other member. Each is in direct continuous communication with the head, which is the director of them all. Each has its particular function to perform in the economy of the body; and the health, strength, and comeliness of the body depends upon the efficiency, the thoroughness, with which each member performs its function.

The Holy Catholic Church, the mystical body of Christ, and of which he is the Head, is not confined to any ecclesiastical organization, nor even to all of them, but has members in every one of them. "The Lord knoweth them that are his." This is not the place in which to deal with the infirmities and corruptions which at the present time mar the beauty and impair the vigor and the efficiency of the Body of Christ; nor to refer to the particular causes of these defects and ailments. There is, however,

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an urgent need that every individual who has received Jesus Christ as Lord and Master shall also receive as a brother beloved and honored in the Lord every person who likewise has received, or is willing to receive, Jesus Christ as Lord and Master. At this point progress toward vital unity begins. He who refuses communion with a fellow-believer in Jesus Christ is a schismatic. He who fails in love lacks faith. He who cherishes unkindly thoughts of another has rejected the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Children of God

"These things shall be! a loftier race
Than e'er the world hath known shall rise."

THE message of the Christian faith is the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ. Since the salvation is from God it is perfect, covering everything, supplying everything. It is all so wonderful, so absorbing, that it is not surprising that men and women enraptured with this or that phase of the redemption process fail to appreciate its unity, and its greatness. At the same time there is no greater, no more fatal, obstacle to the individual's growth in grace, and to the progress of God's kingdom, than warped and petty views of God, and his salvation.

Who can listen to a company of devout negroes singing, "All my sins are taken away," and not feel that the theme is worthy of an eternity of praise! It is amazing that the holy God pardons sins, and grants the peace of reconciliation to everyone who is truly sorry for his sins. This, however, is only a part of God's redemptive purpose. The burden of

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guilt is removed; the peace of atonement is bestowed; but there remains something even more wonderful, he bestows upon each penitent believer the gift of His own nature, together with His own mind and Spirit, and regenerates us through the power of the Holy Spirit as His own beloved children. The heart of the gospel is contained in the words of Jesus, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." The purpose and results of the gospel are summed in these words of the beloved disciple, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. . . . Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is." (I. John 3:1-2) Redemption is the fulfilment of God's creative purpose, when He made man after His own likeness: for the purpose of God hindered and delayed by sin is accomplished when the sons and daughters of men become the children of God.

The simple, unqualified assertion that the true believer is a son of God, is one of the most significant announcements ever made to men. It was easy

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for the heathen to believe in sons and daughters of the gods: for their gods were only larger men; and often less honorable, and less moral, than the average man. It is quite another thing to read in the Scriptures (which exhaust the possibilities of human language to describe the oneness, as well as the holiness, of God) not in one place, but in many; and expressed in such a way that there can be no doubt of the meaning of the speaker or writer that through God's redemptive grace the sin-stained, foolish, wayward, or besotted children of men actually become in the fullest implication of the term children of God, partakers of the divine nature. (II. Peter 1:4)

By the Incarnation the Son of God became man; through regeneration by the Holy Spirit the children of men become the sons of God. (John 1:12-13) The vital and intimate relationship between these two events has never received the attention its importance warrants. Here again the interminable discussions and bitter controversies over the mode by which the Incarnation was effected, as if the mode and not the fact were the thing of importance, have almost if not entirely blinded the belligerents to the significance of the Incarnation itself. If the Incarnation were only a curious freak exhibiting the

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power of the divine nature, and unrelated to the life of men; then men would be warranted in treating it from that standpoint, and the controversies which have raged around it could be justified as intellectual gymnastics. But the Incarnation was not an isolated sportive act of the Holy Spirit, it was part of the divine plan for man's redemption. The Son of God became man, that the sons of men might become the sons of God, heirs of glory, partakers of the divine nature.

By nature the individual is the result of the blending of many lives. The streams of many tendencies, many capacities, many potentialities, meet in the individual; hence the complexities, the contradictions, the paradoxes, the surprises, which at times are so baffling and exasperating, or so refreshing and delightful. Indeed, before development is completed he is not one person but many. In the process of the individual's development these diverse elements through action and reaction unite in producing a distinct personality, governed by a definite set of motives and principles, and reacting more or less uniformly to the stimuli of environment. What was nourished and exercised developed to the extent of its capacity; what was undesired and neglected, atrophied and died. The same is true in the present

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stage of the development of the children of God. (Rom. 7:15-23)

The birth of the divine nature within the man does not destroy his humanity; it adds the determining element, which shall so act and react upon the other elements present that when the process of development is completed the regenerated individual shall wear the image of the divine, instead of the image of the earthy. (I. Cor. 15:49) The spiritual man is not born full grown. At birth he is a babe in Christ, weak, helpless, exposed to many dangers, and in need of protection, and nourishment, and guidance. Yet this puny creature, through the fostering care of the Holy Spirit, grows in grace, until he attains the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. (Eph. 4:13)

That this is not figurative, a forceful and pleasing way of expressing the gracious effects of Christian faith, is convincingly attested by the attendant phenomena. Whoever sincerely accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour becomes a new creature. (II. Cor. 5:15, 17) Not only is the course of his life altered, and the activities of his life changed; the life itself is no longer the same. The thoughts, the emotions, the motives, and the will, are guided by the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 8:14) Wherever such changes are

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lacking, there is grave reason to doubt the reality of the professed spiritual experience. The challenge of Christ in regard to this still holds, "By their fruits ye shall know them." It is only reasonable to expect that every claim to such a profound and far-reaching transformation shall be validated by unmistakable and unshakeable evidences. It is enough for the believer himself to know that the Spirit beareth witness with his spirit, that he is a son of God. (Rom. 8:16) But since the life of the believer is to bear witness to the redemptive power of Jesus Christ; and since the only valid test of his claims is what he accomplishes in his followers, the activities of the believer either announce Christ as King and Saviour, or denounce him as an impostor. Here again the smoke screen of theological wrangles has obscured the importance of this truth, and hidden by its darkness men have complacently continued in sin, that grace might abound.

No one can know the intellectual and spiritual life of another until it is expressed somehow, in a way that is intelligible to the observer. The judgment of what a man is must depend on what he does. The outward activities express the inward thought and feeling. Conduct is the index to character. What a man does, accurately describes what he is.

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Spatially roots and fruits represent the opposites; biologically they are one. The delicious fruit is the product of the unseen roots, in co-operation with the rest of the tree. The fruit indicates the nature and the abundance of the life of the tree. The children of God have their distinguishing marks, characteristics that stamp them as partakers of the divine nature.

There is a new heart. The emotions, desires, affections, demonstrate the new nature. Anger, envy, ill-will, malice, hatred, and uncleanness, are unwelcomed visitors, and are promptly expelled. Gentleness, benevolence, truth, purity, compassion, and love, are cherished and cultivated. They flourish because they find all conditions congenial to their growth. St. Paul is usually thought of as a man who was pre-eminently intellectual. The appeal of his great and brilliant mind is felt by all who read his writings. Yet when this man met Christ on the road to Damascus, the first and most noticeable result of the change was in what through custom we call the heart. He had been filled with a malignant murderous hatred of all who had departed from the customs and traditions of the synagogue. He had stifled every feeling of humanity, and had dragged men and women to prison, and torture, and death.

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And it was this Saul, the man who was ready to kill the body and damn the soul of anyone and everyone who would not accept his view of man's relationship to God, and God's will for men, who declared in the glowing language of the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians the transcendent supremacy of love, placing it above all gifts of intellect, and above all forms of religion.

Was it Saul the persecutor who penned that inspired chapter in praise of love? No. Saul had long since died, and it was the new creature who arose from the death of the old, born again in the image of God, and filled with the compassion of Christ, who wrote it. Those who by the operation of divine grace become the children of God, come to love as God loves, both friends and foes, the lovely and attractive, and the evil and unlovely. "Love your enemies, and do them good, and lend, despairing of no man; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be sons of the Most High: for he is kind toward the unthankful and evil." (Luke 6:35)

There is a new mind, the Christ mind. All the old powers of mind remain, but they are freed from the inhibitions due to sin, and sinful habits. The restrictive power of sin in the mental life is marked and far reaching. In the very nature of things this

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must be so; it cannot be otherwise: for sin is spiritual unsoundness, and in man the spiritual is the determining element. This is most strikingly illustrated in the field of art.

Why do so many artists who display cleverness, which seems to indicate latent greatness, and which attracts a fleeting attention, soon pass with all their works into endless oblivion? In a large number of cases the answer would be sensuality. This does not necessarily imply sexual excess or immorality, although it easily leads to it. This is one of the dangers which threatens all artists, and especially the younger men and women: for the media in which they express their talent or genius is in every case sensuous — voice, body, gesture, drawing, color, form. When spiritual control is lacking, through failure to recognize the supremacy of spirit, and the story, or song, or acting, or picture, or statue, becomes in itself the end, there can be no progress, no development of powers, only decadence. "Art for art's sake" is seldom good art, and it is never great art.

The men to whom the world pays homage as the great masters were in every case pre-eminently spiritual, and their works which are treasured as priceless were and are the expression of some lofty

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thought or spiritual impulse. When the mind is linked to the power of an endless life, and a new heart in which the love of God abounds, the thought life is liberated and transformed. Its horizons are extended; the perspective is altered. Not alone in that new subjects occupy the attention, but that old subjects are viewed from a new angle, with a new background. It is inevitable that the thoughts of one who has come to know God, as revealed in Jesus Christ, cannot be the same as the thoughts of one who is ignorant of Christ, and the God whom he reveals as Father. The new mind is in harmony with God and expresses the will of Jesus Christ. (I. Cor. 2:16)

Emotion, desire, affection, and the activities of the mind, are stamped with the marks of the divine nature; and they declare the nature of the spirit which guides them. "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." (Rom. 8:9) "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God. The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God." (Rom. 8:14, 16) The children of God have the Spirit of their Father.

In God's creative plan man has pre-eminence over the rest of the creation. Through him in an especial

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manner, and to a degree unknown in any other creature, the glory of God was to be expressed, and His wisdom and goodness exemplified. (Gen. 1:27-28) The Lord Jesus Christ is the ideal man, the first-born among many brethren. (Rom. 8:29) Therefore the traits which characterized Him are to be looked for and found in His brethren. "I delight to do thy will, O my God." (Ps. 40:8) "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother." (Matt. 12:50)

There is the same unruffled serenity, and peace, and joyousness of spirit, in the midst of all difficulties, oppositions, dangers, losses, and pain: for the assurance of God's love, and care, and guidance, is always present. Consequently they are enabled to "Do all things without murmurings and questionings: that ye may become blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye are seen as lights in the world." (Phil. 2:14-16) There is the same integrity of character, and openness of life. Nothing furtive or secretive, every action is open to inspection like the page of a book. "Walk as children of the light . . . and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Ye are

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the children of the light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness." (Eph. 5:8, 11) (I. Thess. 5:5) Their gracious kindliness to all acquaintances; their generous response to every call of need; their compassion for the unfortunate and the outcast; their patience with the foolish and evil; their forwardness in every good cause; their clarity and breadth of vision; and their purity of life, are the family traits which characterize the children of God. "Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him: for we shall see him even as he is."

CHAPTER XIV.

The Life Everlasting

BY means of the Christian faith the Holy Spirit leads the believer in a continuous progress, from grace to grace, from knowledge to knowledge and understanding, and from glory to glory, until the redemptive process is completed, and the children of God stand in the presence of the infinite glory without spot, or blemish, or wrinkle, in joy unspeakable. *This and nothing less than this should be the hope of every Christian.* When it is held in its integrity it will enlarge and irradiate the life. To emphasize any particular phase of the redemptive process at the expense of another produces a distorted view of the whole subject, and an abnormal and defective type of Christian character which repels, because of the unsightliness of the mal-development.

In the physical life asymmetry of development is one of the stigmata of degeneracy, something to be ashamed of and concealed, rather than to be exhibited with pride as an enviable distinction. In the spiritual life whatever warps or distorts is like-

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wise to be avoided. A deformed spiritual nature cannot commend the doctrine of the Lord Jesus, and should by all means be corrected. It is to be feared that ministers and leaders in religious work under-rate the evil significance of a distorted and unbalanced spiritual nature.

Because men and women of this type are often very active they are given places of leadership to the great injury of the kingdom, and often with scandal to the church. In every church, however small, one or more of them will be found riding his or her hobby, and insisting that everyone else procure a model of the same hobby horse, and ride it, or be branded with the mark of the beast. Such people need the sympathy and patience and prayers of their fellow Christians; and pastors should endeavor to the utmost of their powers to remove or correct this defect, and to secure a wholesome, vigorous, and symmetrical development in Christ. A great aid in this endeavor is to make clear the unity of the redemptive process, and to give due appreciation to all its elements, parts, and phases. For example, certain types of mind are irresistibly drawn by speculations and prophecies regarding the future.

If anyone announces that he has a map, a chart, or a plan of the ages, these people will flock to hear him. They delight in the thought of future bliss,

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and spend much time picturing to themselves and others what it shall be; usually to the neglect of urgent duties. Such people need to learn that what we are and do today is helping to determine our eternal tomorrow, and that through time wasted in idle speculations they are neglecting to prepare for the priceless opportunities of the life everlasting. Those who are faithful to their present trust will be ready for whatever demands the future may bring, and for whatever promotion the Master sees wise to give. Because there has been and is so much that is grotesque, and even anti-Christian, in the many charts, diagrams, and plans, that ignorant and unbalanced enthusiasts have presented to their admiring followers as God's plan of the ages, and the future stage of His kingdom, men of intelligence and spiritual understanding have been inclined to say less, and dwell on the life everlasting in a perfected world, with a glorious body, in the company of the redeemed, and in the fellowship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, than the importance and beauty and comfort of the subject warrants.

There is no instinct stronger in man than the hope of life eternal in a better world, under conditions which shall give assurance of the fulfilment of every noble aspiration and desire. The oldest records known to us at present deal with life in ancient

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Egypt; and there in the dawn of the historic period we find the same desire, the same hope. The embalming of the body, the elaborate funeral ceremonies, the decorations and the furniture of the tombs, had as their object the assurance of the happiness of the departed in the Ament, in the garden of Aalou. All through the ages the same hope has prevailed, of a heavenly and everlasting life. The vision of the heavenly life is in every case colored and moulded by the knowledge, experience, and desires of the people. The African warrior and the American Indian looked forward to a happy hunting ground. The Valhalla of the Norsemen with its fighting and feasting and heroic adventures; and the Paradise of the Moslem people with its beautiful houris, and rich feasts, and everflowing wine, reflect the experiences and enjoyments of those who conceived them.

Little is said in the Old Testament of life beyond the grave; and the Sadducees consistently and bitterly denied the possibility of immortality. On these grounds some have attempted to prove that it was not until the Exile or later that the Hebrews gained the hope of life everlasting, under heavenly conditions. The evidences favorable to this theory are unconvincing, while on the contrary there are proofs which establish the postulate that, in common with

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all other peoples the Hebrews treasured belief in immortality, and that it is always taken for granted as self-evident by the Old Testament writers. The translations of Enoch and Elijah were understood as a passing into the everlasting life with the glory of conquerors, without having to pass through the wicket-gate of death. Job asked the question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" and answered it by the immortal declaration, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and at last he will stand up upon the earth: and after my skin, even this body is destroyed, then without my flesh shall I see God." (Job 19:25-26) The writer of the Seventeenth Psalm, in the midst of dangers and evils, never doubted that it should be well with them that turn from evil to follow after God. "As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with beholding thy form." This can refer only to the awakening from death.

The Forty-ninth Psalm depicts the vanity of wealth and position, especially when obtained by evil methods. The wicked "Are appointed as a flock for Sheol; Death shall be their shepherd: and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning," of the new life. How different the lot of the righteous in the morning of the world to come; they shall have the dominion, and death shall not have

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power over them. "God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol; for he will receive me."

In the prophets we find references to the future life:

"He hath swallowed up death for ever." (Is. 25:8)

"Thy dead shall live; my dead bodies shall arise."

(Is. 26:19)

"I will ransom them from the land of Sheol:

I will redeem them from death:

O death, where are thy plagues?

O Sheol, where is thy destruction?" (Hos. 13:14)

"Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." (Dan. 12:2)

It is often stated that the people of India have no belief or desire for personal immortality, that their great hope is absorption into Brahma, or Nirvana. Various distinguished scholars give translations from the Vedas which are worth quoting for their beauty, and for the light they throw on this subject. "He who gives alms goes to the highest place in heaven; he goes to the gods." The following is from a prayer addressed to Soma: "Where there is eternal light, in the world where the sun is placed, in that immortal imperishable world place me, O Soma! Where life is free, in the third heaven of heavens, where the worlds are radiant, there make me immortal! Where there is happiness and de-

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light, where joy and pleasure reside, where the desire of our desires is attained, there make me immortal." The reasoning of Socrates, as given by Plato in his *Phaedo*, on the immortality of the soul, is too well known to need more than a passing reference. The following sentence gives the tenor of his thoughts, which were shared by the greatest of the Greek and Roman philosophers: "That soul, I say, herself invisible, departs to the invisible world—to the divine and immortal and rational: thither arriving, she lives in bliss and is released from the error and folly of men, their fears and wild passions and all other human ills, and for ever dwells in company with the gods."

Even a cursory reading of the New Testament will show that Jesus Christ and His disciples taught clearly and unequivocally a continuous progress in the spiritual life. A progress that death itself would not arrest or impede, and which would go on until the children of men attained the measure of the fullness of the stature of Jesus Christ, God's Son. St. Paul with his usual directness declares that if the Christian faith can give nothing beyond this life, it is not worth a man's attention.

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." (I. Cor. 15:19) It is for the harvest the crops are cultivated. It is

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for the luscious fruits that the trees in the orchards and gardens are pruned and sprayed and guarded from injury. If the farmer were convinced that there could be no harvest, would he continue to spend time and means on the cultivation of the crops? If this life were all, if death were the end of all our labors and sacrifices and hopes, there would be no good reason for denying ourselves anything that would minister to our pleasure and comfort. What a world this would be if men had no hope of life everlasting in a perfected world, with a glorious body, in the company of the redeemed, enjoying the fellowship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!

Our instincts are trustworthy, they have never deceived man, and they will not deceive him until he has been untrue to them, and has violated them. Man desires life, and all that life means. He rebels against extinction as something monstrous, and unjust, and needlessly cruel. He feels the incompleteness of this present life with its many losses and failures and disappointments. Here the noblest endeavors apparently end in shame: Isaiah sawn asunder, Socrates condemned to drink the hemlock, Aristides ostracized, Jesus rejected, spat upon, crucified, Savonarola tortured, strangled, burned.

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To this day the man of clearer vision than his fellows is held in suspicion. The prophets who would lead men to higher planes of life are dishonored. Anyone who will not conform to the old and evil customs, the base tyranny of vicious systems, is broken on the wheel as thoroughly as the victims of the Spanish Inquisition. Our civilization is very pitiful to the body, but it crucifies the soul of anyone who refuses to do homage to its gods. Jerusalem is not the only city, and the Jews are not the only people to whom it can be said, "Which of the prophets did your fathers not stone?" Justice demands the balancing of all wrongs, the elimination of all evil, and the enthronement of right; and since this has not been done, and is not being done, in the life of this world, by faith in God's promises "We look for a new heaven and a new earth, in which dwelleth righteousness." (II. Peter 3:13)

Of all the claims made by the Lord Jesus, and they were many and great, perhaps the most distinctive and the most striking was the declaration that He and the Father are One. The one most closely approaching this is the power to confer eternal life. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never

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perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand." (John 10:10, 27-28) "This is the will of my Father, that every one that beholdeth the Son, and believeth on him, should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:40) "Every one that hath left houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life." (Matt. 19:29) "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die." (John 10:25-26) Similar statements equally clear and positive can easily be found.

All the New Testament writers stressed the gift of life everlasting, with all the term as used by them connotes, as chief of the blessings conferred on believers by the Lord Jesus Christ. "God will render to every man according to his works: to them that by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and incorruption, eternal life." (Rom. 2:6-7) "The wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." We know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (II. Cor. 5:1) "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus

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Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." (I. Peter 1:3-4) "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." (I. John 2:17) "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." (Jude 21) Because of these exceeding great and precious promises made by the Lord Jesus, and repeated through His disciples, the Christian believer is confident that death is only the wicket-gate through which he passes on his way to the smile of the Father's welcome, and the joy of the Father's home.

CHAPTER XV.

In a Perfected World

“Why is all around us here
As if some lesser god had made the world,
But had not force to shape it as he would,
Till the High God behold it from beyond,
And enter it, and make it beautiful?”

THIS world in which we live at present is beautiful. There are times and places when its loveliness holds one enraptured. Who is there that has not seen some spot of earth fair enough to be a Paradise of God! How bountifully she yields of her fruits for man's needs. More than enough for every living creature. No shortage in Nature's provision, no excuse for hunger and discomfort, and wretchedness. And yet some of the loveliest places on earth are the most unwholesome. The exuberance of nature, the teeming wealth of life springing from the soil, are often linked with conditions which breed pestilence and death for the human inhabitants. Here man must wage a continual warfare against unfriendly forces: the frost which kills the early fruit buds; the rains and winds

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which beat down the ripened grains; the beetles, and weevils, and scales, and flies, which ruin the crops; the volcanic eruptions and tidal waves which engulf cities and provinces; the cyclones and tornados which in an hour destroy the toilful gains of generations.

Partly because of the adverse influences which at times are particularly strong, the history of mankind has not been a continuous progress; far too often the labors of centuries have been destroyed in an outburst of popular folly and madness. Everything we know here is in a state of flux; all is passing; all dies. Nothing remains; and men are swept on by the stream of time into the night of death. With ruthless hands the tenderest ties are broken; and desolation replaces the joy of love. In this world, however blessed may be our portion, we cannot know the desire of our desires. As truly as the patriarchs of old, we desire a heavenly country. We rejoice in the assurance, "Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love Him." (I. Cor. 2:9) "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to usward. For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God. For

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the creation was subject to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God." (Rom. 8:18-21)

How gladly we hail the promise of life everlasting in a perfected world, into which nothing shall enter that defiles, or hurts, or misleads. "He that sitteth on the throne said, Behold I make all things new." (Rev. 21:5) In vivid figurative language the twenty-first chapter of Revelation depicts the blessedness of the new heaven and the new earth. The distinction that now exists between the heavenly and the earthly shall give place to an inter-relationship that makes for the realization of man's highest dreams. The holy city of the redeemed, in which the throne of God and of the Lamb is placed, comes down from heaven. It is the union of heaven and earth, or the establishment upon earth of heavenly conditions. It is forever purged of the things which cause evil and sorrow. God is in the midst of His people, as a Father in the heart of his family. Death and sin have been destroyed. "Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more." The most priceless things of the world are used to describe the heavenly city; they are the materials out of which it is built. All that is glorious and honor-

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able in this world shall have its place in it. "Then shall we know even as we have been known:" for in the light of the throne all things shall be revealed, and the darkness of ignorance dispelled forever. All conditions shall then be favorable, and all forces subject to the intelligence and will of the children of God. "Then shall the righteous shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

CHAPTER XVI.

With a Glorious Body

THE human body when at its best is entrancingly beautiful. It represents the highest type of living being of which we have personal knowledge, and all representations of higher beings, such as angels, archangels, and the gods of the heathen, are copied from the most beautiful and the most perfect human forms. The superiority, however, is not physical. The eagle and the buzzard can see farther; the dog and the wolf can run more swiftly; the ox and the mule are stronger. It is his mind which makes him the master over all other earthly beings; and it is his mind which gives him mastery of the elements, so that wind, water, fire, and lightning, are harnessed to do his will.

Among men it is the spirit which gives distinction. The man of integrity and benevolence is the superior man. The student of anatomy and physiology re-echoes the words of the Psalmist, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." No one who has studied the construction of the human body and its adapta-

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tion to man's needs can refrain from paying homage to the wisdom and skill manifested in its design and construction. Nevertheless, it is insufficient for the fullest exercise of the power of one's mind, and the enterprises of the soul. While it is true that the body serves man, and serves him admirably; it is also true that the man is hampered in his noblest ambitions, his greatest designs, by the limitations and weaknesses of his body. Its appetites often become excessive or deranged, leading to the formation of vicious habits such as drunkenness and other drug addictions, and immorality.

In every community there are examples of the devastating effects of the vicious circle produced by what physicians would term a weak and depraved condition of the bodily tissues. Because of this condition there is a craving for stimulants or narcotics, which, when indulged, only accentuates the weakness; which, in turn, leads to a stronger and stronger desire; which at last is uncontrollable. The soundest and the most perfect body is easily destroyed. The unnoticed bite of a tiny insect will convey the deadly bubonic plague, or yellow fever, or malaria. A miscalculation, a stumble, a slight inattention, and the body becomes a mangled ruin. Even when all these weaknesses and dangers have been avoided or

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overcome, and a peaceful old age is arrived at, it is a period of increasing feebleness; so that in many cases death is looked forward to as a desirable relief from irremediable decrepitude. Under the most favorable conditions there is much of suffering, and only God knows how many there are who never know complete freedom from pain, and are shut out from every activity by pain and weakness that will not go, and which no human skill seems able to assuage.

When the realm of mind is entered the shortcomings and weaknesses of man's present condition are pronounced and inescapably noticeable. Lack of mental capacity in a large percentage of the population has created serious problems, especially in large and wealthy cities under democratic government. The number of morons in "smart" social circles is really startling. There is point to the old proverb, "More harm is wrought by want of thought than want of heart." A low intelligence cannot be linked with a lofty spiritual nature. It is, however, among men and women of outstanding intellectual ability that the limitations of man's present powers are most keenly felt. How often one is baffled and disheartened in his noblest endeavors because his mental equipment will not enable him to cope with the difficulties he encounters! How many evils are

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tolerated, and how many blessings are unrecognized and unappropriated through lack of understanding! The safety and progress of our Western civilization is already endangered because mental development has not kept pace with material progress. "Where there is no vision the people perish."

If our bodies are unequal to the demands made upon them in this present world, what must the bodies be like which shall meet all our requirements, and be the perfected instrument and agent of our perfected minds and spirits in the life of the world to come? Sharp and bitter controversy has often arisen over the question whether the body of glory is merely the old body of the flesh transformed to meet the new conditions, or whether it is one altogether new, and unlike the old. Since equally devout and learned men differ on this as on many other questions, there is not the slightest justification for any Christian allowing himself to become angry and bitter at other Christians because they happen to hold a different view from his own of the mode by which the new and glorious body shall be prepared, given, and put on. The great thing is the gift of the body of glory.

Practically all that we know of the body of glory is given us by St. Paul. He speaks of it as a building

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from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, as compared with the tent in which we now dwell. The comparison is apt and illuminating. The tent is easily overthrown by wind, easily consumed by fire, easily cut in pieces with a knife or other sharp instrument, and can be chewed and rendered useless by animals. It gives little protection from severe cold or heat, and as little security from wild beasts or robbers. It has become the symbol of the nomad life. The house is built on a secure foundation of substantial materials. It withstands the wind and the rain. It is a shelter from the heat, and from the cold. Its strength affords security against marauders and against wild beasts. (II. Cor. 5:1) It is the symbol of permanent settlement.

As the tent of the pilgrim is exchanged for the house of the settler, the permanent resident, so this body of flesh and blood is put off that we may receive another. One that is not subject to the weakness and decay of the old; and one that is in all things in perfect adjustment with the new environment, and thoroughly equipped for the duties and opportunities of the heavenly world. (II. Cor. 5:2-5)

He also declares in language that is blunt to the point of rudeness that it is not the body which served

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us upon earth, and which was laid away in the grave, although there is a definite relationship between the two. As it is not the seed grain that is sown which constitutes the future crop, but something greater and more abundant produced by the action of the germ of life within the seed grain, so this body of humiliation does not become the body of glory. The germ of life grows within the quickened grain, and feeds upon it until the tiny rootlets strike down into the earth and draw from the cold dead elements of earth the materials which will go toward the formation of the new life. At the same time the little leaflets stretch up into the air and sunlight, and serve their part in the formation of the new body. The acorn is not the oak; it only contains the germ of life which through development becomes the oak. As the germ of life within the acorn first of all feeds upon the easily assimilated nutrient materials stored up for it in the acorn, and then sends out the tiny rootlets and leaflets, and these, through the continual exercise of the powers of life, build up the forest monarch, so the germ of spiritual life implanted in the natural man by the Holy Spirit in the act of regeneration grows continuously, and the body of glory is intimately related to, and also depends upon, these activities. (I. Cor. 3:12-15)

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There is something tremendously solemn, yet inspiring, in the thought that we each one are preparing or helping to prepare the eternal spiritual body. A man of evil countenance passed the Emperor Napoleon, and the emperor asked who he was and made some comment on his face. The one to whom he was speaking said, "Surely, Sire, you do not hold a man responsible for his face?" "Yes," said Napoleon, "a man is responsible for the kind of a face he has, and what is written on that face when he has passed his fortieth year."

"Our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto himself." (Phil. 3:20-21) "It is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him." (I. John 3:2) Many excellent authorities point out that, while the body in which Jesus appeared to His disciples was the body in which he suffered on the cross, and which lay in the new tomb in Joseph's garden, it was not the glorified body which he assumed at the time of his ascension and enthronement. This subject is worthy of the most careful, reverent,

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and unbiased study. It gives a new significance to the translation of Enoch, and the translation of Elijah; and it points to the future of believers in Christ. In such a study there is danger of excess if particularization is attempted. "We shall be like Him." When John in the vision on Patmos saw the glorified Christ, the glory was overwhelming, and he fell at his feet as dead. O, to be like Him!

CHAPTER XVII.

In the Company of the Redeemed

Browning in Rabbi Ben Ezra says:

“Grow old along with me!

The best is yet to be,

. . . For which the first was made.”

Tennyson closes his lofty tribute to his dead friend Hallam with these lines:

“One God, one law, one element,

And one far-off divine event,

To which the whole creation moves.”

IT has been said that “The poets are our fathers in wisdom.” Perhaps because the true poet is always something of a prophet, seeing with the eye of the soul things hidden from the common man. No man who lacked the prophetic gift ever attained greatness as a poet, although he might easily become famous as a writer of clever jingles. To visualize the future, in order to have more exact knowledge of what lies beyond the veil, has always been an absorbing topic for many people. Some have pretended to know, claiming they were in communication with the spirits of the departed, and for a price they

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would act as the medium of communication between living and dead friends. Following the World War this became so marked, to satisfy the longings of those who had lost their dear ones, that Kipling felt constrained to write *The Road to En-Dor*, to help his countrymen and countrywomen to a wiser and more wholesome outlook. In these great matters it is not good to be wise beyond what has been written for our instruction; and there is no sound reason why we should try to be, since there is enough in the recorded teachings of the Lord Jesus and his apostles to assure us that the poet was correct when he wrote, "The best is yet to be, . . . for which the first was made." There need be no doubt in the mind of any true believer that there "Is one far-off divine event, to which the whole creation moves"; and that it is the fulfilment of God's creative purpose when the children of God shall be gathered into one goodly fellowship in the Father's house of many mansions.

St. Paul in his letter to the Colossians, and the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, in referring to the institutes of religion based on the Mosaic law, speak of them as shadows of things to come, and a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. (Col. 2:17; Heb. 8:5 and 10:1) This harmonizes with other statements which tell us that all the good things of

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earth are but the copy and shadow of the heavenly. That every pure and noble relationship on earth shall find its highest expression in the City of God. And every true instinct, however starved and repressed by the artificial conditions which men in their conceit devise to bind themselves with, shall find its fruition in the friendly environment of divine love.

Friendship is one of the truest joys of life. Who that has known friendship can doubt that "A friend is God's best gift"? How often the tinsel and the dross are preferred to the pure gold! How slow men are to utilize their spiritual resources, while so keen to exploit the material. What a wealth of unminted gold there is in friendship! What treasures of pure delight in the fellowship of the upright and generous! Is there any fellowship which should mean so much to the believer as the communion of saints? Why, then, is it not more highly prized?

There was nothing our Lord Jesus seems to have longed for so greatly, or enjoyed more thoroughly, than friendship. Every sign of friendship offered Him won a prompt and generous response. To neglect the fellowship of brethren in Christ is to slight a most precious means of grace. The love which God's children show for each other is the proof of God's love. Until one hungers for friendship as Christ hungered, he remains unfit to become

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a resident of the heavenly Jerusalem. For the heavenly life begins on earth, and nothing alien can enter the gates of the heavenly city. The communion of saints is begun here, and is continued with increasing fulness of enjoyment through all eternity. "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." (I. John 1:7) This communion or fellowship is not based on race, nation, wealth, culture, or on social position. It is the fellowship of those who are led by the Spirit of God, and recognize each other as children of the one Father, partakers of the same divine nature, and members together of the household of God.

There are those who would make it depend on culture, or family, but Abul Fazl more nearly expressed the mind of Christ when he wrote, "Thy elect have no dealings with either heresy or orthodoxy; for neither of them stands behind the screen of thy truth." When the Roman centurion had shown so great faith in Him, the Lord Jesus said to the people about Him, "Many shall come from the east, and from the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." St. John in his vision saw, "A great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation, and of all tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb,

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arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands." (Rev. 7:9-10) There can be no greater contrast than between Saul the Pharisee and Paul the apostle of Jesus Christ. The one was bitterly narrow, with his sympathies and affections rigidly confined to the people of his own tribe and nation; the other found something admirable in all men, and recognized in every fellow-man of every race and language one whom God loved. It is by way of protest against all classifications based on accidents of time and place, and of race and culture, that St. Paul reverts again and again to the unity in brotherhood of believers in Christ. "There can not be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all, and in all." (Col. 3:11) It is distinctively a fellowship of love in the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

The unity of revelation as recorded in the Holy Scriptures is made very clear by the two accounts of God and man, and their relationship, as found in Genesis and Revelation. In the first, man is pictured living alone with his wife in a garden, having God as his friend. To some people this was the golden age to which they look back with longing. In the second, men live with God in a holy city. They no longer meet occasionally as friends in visits that always terminate in the departure of each to his own

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home; they live together as members of one family. "The residence of God is with men," and he dwells with them, as a father with his children. The first could not permanently satisfy man's nature; in the second he finds an outlet for all his instincts, and a field for all his powers. In the first we find man ignorant and untried and defeated; in the second he has tasted the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, and by the redemptive work of Christ and the Holy Spirit, he has emerged from the battle more than conqueror, and God has given him the crown of life. This harmonizes with man's passion for friendship. The social instinct demands satisfaction; it is ineradicable: for it is a part of man's truest nature. Every normal person finds a large part of the joy of life in friendship. Arthur Balfour in one of his lectures made much of the social nature of God.

A man may become the ruler of the earth, and possessor of all its wealth, but if he has no friends, if his power and possessions have killed his capacity for friendship, he is only a poor creature, one to be pitied rather than envied: for in attaining his ambition he has sacrificed his noblest self.

Far too often ignorant enthusiasts have launched crusades to remake humanity after their own image. God has mercifully prevented their success. A very

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common assumption of certain types is that everything that is natural is therefore evil. Because of this theory they would destroy every instinct and live an emasculated, sterile, artificial life. A larger knowledge and clearer understanding would have led them to see that our instincts are sound, every single one of them is God-given. We may misdirect them, to our own hurt, but the fault is ours. Often they are misdirected—the instinct which bids the hungry man seek food may lead through indulgence to gluttony and drunkenness. The social instinct may be perverted and debased, nevertheless in itself it is noble and God-given. “The Son of man came not to destroy, but to save.” The redemptive process does not save man by destroying his powers, or by making him less manly. Quite the contrary, it augments his powers, it makes all things possible to him; he is more truly man than ever, because of the divine Spirit within. His passion for friendship is God-like. “My delight is with the sons of men.” God so loves men that he is the perfect friend, who will not live without his friends, but will die for them if need be.

Man is so constituted that he cannot live without friendship. One of the most terrible punishments is solitary confinement, cut off from every tie of human fellowship. The poor victims of this torture

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have made the strangest kinds of friendship with all kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, and even insects, in order to have some living thing on which to pour out their affection. Every church organization, every fraternal order, every club, or guild, or union, is a monument to man's instinct for friendship.

One of the chief joys of life is to be in the company of a group of congenial spirits. It has an enlarging and liberating influence that is marked. Our friendships do much to make or mar us. "Walk with wise men, and thou shalt be wise; but the companions of fools shall smart for it." (Prov. 13:20) Good friends help to goodness; evil friends degrade.

"A man is known by the company he keeps." Contacts with others are of value. They smooth the sharp corners; and teach consideration of the rights and feelings of others. The solitary life is meagre, and non-symmetrical, always narrow, and usually selfish, and unfruitful. That individual who deliberately withdraws from the fellowship of his kind because he fears their influence, or is vexed by their behavior, or is concerned only with the salvation of his own soul, not only fails in spiritual development, he also commits spiritual mayhem upon himself, and deprives God and his fellows of the service he owes them. "He that saveth his life shall lose it." It is good to have a certain portion of each day, or even

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certain days in the year, in which to be alone with God. To get away from the cares and pleasures of the world in order to meditate upon things that are eternal, and to cultivate friendship with God. From such a retirement one comes refreshed and strengthened; and is able to resume the duties of life with a clearer mind, and larger sympathies, and serener spirit. In this there is no contempt for social life, and no evasion of social duties; it is rather the augmenting of one's resources in order to render more effective service.

"He that loveth not knoweth not God." (I. John 4:8) Capacity for friendship, and appreciation of one's friends, indicate growth in grace. The more largely one is able to respond to the needs, and hopes, and fears, and joys of others, the more God-like his nature. Since God, who is love, makes his dwelling with the redeemed in the city whose very atmosphere is love, it necessarily follows that no misanthrope can dwell in it, its air would be fatal to him. As on earth so in heaven the chief joy of the redeemed is the fellowship of congenial spirits. The man who refuses to make friends on earth shall have no place in heaven. "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." (I. John 3:14)

Our friendships here are helping to determine the fellowships we shall enjoy in heaven. "Whatso-

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ever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." (Gal. 6:7) What joy could a jazz-bred youth have in the fellowship of Moses, Samuel, and Elijah, or with Isaiah, Dante, and Milton? What zest could a modern flapper have in the company of Mary and Elizabeth, or of Priscilla and Elizabeth Fry? We are told that "Judas went to his own place," but so does everyone else. "In my Father's house are many mansions." Infinite wisdom makes no mistakes, and the sphere each one shall occupy, and the fellowships each one shall enjoy, shall in every case be most appropriate, and most suited to the individual's capacities, and tastes, and happiness.

In this world, heredity, social antecedents, and wealth have very much to do in determining fellowship, but there shall be no artificial or arbitrary distinctions in the heavenly society. The divine life shall be untrammelled, and, like the gates of the city, the doors which lead to friendship shall always be wide open. And, yet, as in this life men and women inevitably gravitate into groups of those who are mutually attracted, so in the heavenly life there are particular friendships: for friendship is not a weed which grows at random, it is a choice plant which is carefully nurtured.

Note some of the groupings referred to in Revelation: The martyrs underneath the altar (6:9-11),

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those who came out of the great tribulation (7:13-17), those who could sing the secret song (14:1-5), the saints who had been victorious over the beast (15:2-4). "As one star differeth from another star in glory" so the blessedness of heaven shall be one thing to one person, and quite another thing to someone else. Nevertheless, the redeemed shall be one family in Christ living in joyous fellowship with each other, and the differences in gifts and understanding and powers and tastes shall contribute to the enlargement and joy of all: for then the communion of saints shall be a living reality.

It is a fellowship based on the purest friendship from which every element of self-interest is eliminated. There are no rivalries or jealousies or scrambling for the seats of honor. "Love seeketh not her own." Each rejoices in the other's welfare and progress, and each seeks to do the other honor. "In love preferring one another." It is a selfless life in which each one's personality attains its uttermost development, and finds its truest expression: for as the individual gives freely of himself to all his fellows, he also receives from them in like proportion, and "Each builds up the other in love." It is brought to its perfection and maintained in the environment of divine love; the redeemed are conscious that they live, and move, and have their being

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in God. It is beautiful and glorious in all its aspects: for it is the flowering of the divine nature. "God is all in all." Of their fellowship, as of everything else the redeemed can say, "All my springs are found in thee." From Him as from a center all life radiates; but He is more than an influence, a force, or even the sum total of all influences, forces, and potentialities, more than the complete environment: for as friend meets with friend in glad companionship, or a father becomes the companion of his sons, so God enters into the fellowship of the redeemed. This is the crowning joy of the fellowship of the saints through all eternity.

CHAPTER XVIII.

In Fellowship With God

ST. PAUL with his usual perspicacity recognized to the full that our instincts are trustworthy, and until warped by desire and indulgence in sin they are a safe guide. The moral instincts are usually termed conscience. Spite of the vehemence of his nature, and the intensity of his conviction that only in Christ can men know God adequately, and the narrowness of his early training, he acknowledged our debt to the light of nature in his address to the people of Lystra. More significant still, when we remember the author, are these words: "For when Gentiles that have not the law do by nature the things of the law, these, not having the law, are the law unto themselves; in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them." (Rom. 2:14-15)

While remembering the insufficiency of instinct, how far short it comes of satisfying the thoughts that arise in our minds, we must recognize with St.

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Paul that so far as it goes it is dependable: for instinct is the law of God written into man's nature. Conscience is the voice of God speaking to the soul of man. The advice of Polonius is sound:

"To thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man."

When followed honestly, man's instincts lead to the truth. It is not surprising, then, to find that in every soul of man there is an unquenchable desire for God. When it no longer exists, the soul of that individual is dead. St. Augustine recognized the universality of man's instinct for God, and longing for God, when he exclaimed, "O God, thou hast made us for thyself, and we can know no rest, until we rest in thee." It was this hunger for God which led David out of the depths of his infamy to repentance. Again and again in the Scriptures we find expression of this intense longing of the soul.

"As the hart panteth after the water brooks,
So panteth my soul after thee, O God.
My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God:
When shall I come and appear before God?" (Ps. 42:1, 2)
"O God, thou art my God: earnestly will I seek thee:
My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee.
Because thy lovingkindness is better than life,

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My lips shall praise thee." (Ps. 63:1, 3)

"My soul thirsteth after thee, as a parched land."

(Ps. 143:6)

Man's instinct for God is ineradicable; it is a part of his nature, when it ceases to exist the man is dead.

Consciousness of estrangement from God brings torment, more tantalizing than hunger or thirst. Without God man feels lonely, very much as a little child away from his parents and in a strange place. This explains the frequent repetition of the promise, "I will be with thee." Man always needs God, although he does not always perceive his need. Only those who know God, and know what He means to them, can appreciate the wealth of privilege, and the overflow of felicity implied in the announcement, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them." (Rev. 21:3)

It is not surprising that men should desire God, but it is surprising that God desires men's love with an intensity that is amazing. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (I. John 4:10) He has always sought the friendship and fellowship of men. When Adam, conscious of his guilt, hid from God in the garden, God called him to Himself, and helped him in his trouble. On that

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as on all other occasions he proved Himself a friend in need. He visited Abraham in his tent by the oaks of Mamre. He talked with Moses face to face as friend talks with friend. Theirs was a great privilege, but a much greater awaits the redeemed in glory; they shall see the unveiled face of God. To Moses, Abraham, and all others he was veiled; they were unfit to look upon his glory.

It was a daring thing for the ancient prophet to say, "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty." (Is. 33:17) But the vision is realized by those who dwell in the city of God. "They shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads." (Rev. 22:4) How wonderful the love of God for men! "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." (Jer. 31:3) How condescending His grace, much as He desires our love, and the enjoyment of our fellowship, He will not force Himself upon us, but He makes known the longing of His soul. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." (Rev. 3:20) This also indicates the intimacy of the fellowship; its freedom from the coldness and restrictions of everything official and formal. God is Love; it is of the very essence of His nature that He should

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love; but that He should love us—therein lies a marvel that shall grow more and more wonderful through all eternity. That the eternal King of glory should desire our love and fellowship more than we are capable of loving anyone, and that He has planned to have us live in intimate fellowship with Him through all eternity, crowns manhood with glory and honor. (Heb. 2:7) This is His own promise, and it means all that the words imply: "If a man love me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." (John 14:23)

What was the secret of the joy of Eden? Was it not that God walked with man day by day in the closest friendship? What constitutes the joy of the Holy City, the heavenly Jerusalem? Is it not that God dwells in it with His children; and that the friendship broken through man's unworthiness in the garden is renewed on a more generous basis in the city? To those who have come to know Him through Jesus Christ, God is not the First Great Cause: He is the most delightful person in the universe, the most loving Father, the most wonderful Companion, and the dearest Friend. "And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall

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serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be on their foreheads. And they shall reign for ever and ever." (Rev. 22:3-5)

"In thy presence is fulness of joy;
At thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."
(Ps. 16:11)

CHAPTER XIX.

Summary

THE essentials of the Christian faith are as follows:

There is one God, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

He has revealed Himself to men.

He spake in olden times through the prophets; and in these latter days through Jesus Christ, His Son.

The substance of this revelation is contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament.

Out of the fulness of His divine compassion and infinite love, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to redeem mankind.

For man's salvation the eternal Son became incarnate, and shared the common life of humble workingmen.

He was crucified under Pontius Pilate, suffered death, and was buried.

On the third day He arose from the dead.

He ascended into heaven; and is enthroned with glory at the right hand of God.

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At the consummation of the age, He shall appear in glorious majesty to judge the living and the dead; and to inaugurate in the fulness of its glory His everlasting kingdom of righteousness, truth, and love.

There is one blessed Holy Spirit, sent by the Father to regenerate in the divine image all who are obedient to the truth; and to be their Paraclete in all the circumstances of life; to enlighten their minds in the knowledge of God's love; to abide in them; and to perfect them in all gifts and graces and powers until they shall become the express image of the Divine glory.

There is one holy and universal Church, which is not confined to any ecclesiastical organization, and which is composed of the faithful people of God; those who in all ages, and in all lands, and in all societies, sects, churches, and religions, have sought, and are seeking to know and to do the will of God.

This holy and universal Church is the body of Christ; and at Christ's manifestation in glory shall become His Bride. Through the Church as His body, guided by the indwelling Spirit of God, the Lord Jesus Christ is carrying on his work in the world.

Through regeneration by the Holy Spirit the chil-

SUMMARY

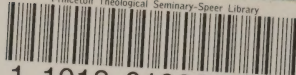
dren of men are made partakers of the Divine nature and become the sons of God. They shall live through all eternity in a perfected world, with a glorious body, in the company of the redeemed, and in fellowship with God.

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